Knowledge in Acting

A Survey of Anscombe's account of practical knowledge

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Summery

In my paper I will give an analyse of Elizabeth Anscombe's theory of intentional actions as she present it in her canonical work *Intention* from 1957. My discussion will primarily be focusing on the tools that Anscombe provides in order to describe what action is. Thesse tools are the characterisation of intentional action as known not by matter of observation, and that when something is an intentional action the question 'Why?' has application. I will argue that the way Anscombe approach the subject of action does in itself have philosophical impact.

Anscombe approach the subject of intention with some clear-cut examples of intentional action. When the agent has non-observational knowledge of what she is doing and may answer the 'Why?' question, then one may say that the event is an intentional action. In addition to the non-observational knowledge, and the question 'Why?' there is also some pre-conditions that have to be in place in order for us to say that we know what we are doing.

In starting with the description of the phenomena in the present tense Anscombe focus on the practical side of intention. The main argument of my paper, though, is that acting intentionally is a certain way of knowing, essentially different from the theoretical way of knowing. Knowledge in acting is practical knowledge. The features of this kind of knowledge is being brought out by the enquiry into 'non-observational knowledge', the pre conditions that demarks the way we 'know how to', and the application of the question 'Why?' My claim is that knowledge is in this way described as the basic state in intentional action, and I find this to be a true description of these events.

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Part One

Introductory

The Field of Enquiry

Each hour of our everyday lives there is normally a whole range of things that we do. This morning I woke up at the ring of an alarm, checked what the weather was like, got dressed, bumped my toe while walking through the kitchen doorway, made tea, spilled the tea when drinking it, read the newspaper, thought about the future US president, gave my daughter a hug, and took my bike to my reading room. These are just descriptions of some of the things that I have done so far today. Some of these descriptions of the things that we do are descriptions of intentional actions. In our every day it does not normally introduce any problem of understanding to decide which of these descriptions are of intentional actions and which are not. As Elizabeth Anscombe writes in *Intention,* 'Description of a human action is something enormously complicated, if one were to say what is really involved in it—and yet a child can give such a report!'[1] In doing philosophy we should aim at describing what is really involved in the phenomena that we seek to understand. This paper is an attempt to inquire into what is really involved in intentional action.

Anscombe's work *Intention* from 1957 offers a controversial approach to the theory of action. I find that her work from this period is onto something vital and essential about the theory of action. She introduces a non-reductive modern way to view and speak about agency. To a large extent her non-reductive way depends on her approach to the subject. This approach starts with intentional actions. Her way of describing the field of intentional action is not by way of describing the necessary and

[1] G. E. M Anscombe, *Intention*, Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 2000 (originally published by Basil Blackwell, 1957) p. 80.

sufficient conditions of the concept. I would like to emphasise Anscombe's starting point, which I take to be of great importance. In this paper I will analyze Anscombe's way of characterizing and zooming in on the topic of intentional action. I will try to be true to what Anscombe actually says, and try elucidate her claims. In some respects I will take on a different view then she, however. My aim will be to try to reach a deeper understanding of the concept of practical knowledge. Anscombe has a concept of practical knowledge as both a precondition for doing something intentionally, and something that describes what the special way of knowing that is involved in acting intentionally is. It is practical not because of what is known, i.e. the object, but because of the *way* it is known.

> . . . the account given by Aquinas of the nature of practical knowledge holds: practical knowledge is 'the cause of what it understands', unlike 'speculative' knowledge, which 'is derived from the objects known'. This means more then that practical knowledge is observed to be a necessary condition of the production of various results; or that an idea of doing such-and-such in such-and-such ways is such a condition. It means that without it what happens does not come under the description—execution of intentions—whose characteristics we have been investigating.[2]

The trait that enables us to identify the class of intentional actions is, according to Anscombe, that in doing something intentionally we have a knowledge of what we are doing in doing it that is in some sense non-observational. In doing something intentionally, for example taking the cap of a bottle and drinking the water in it, I know what I am doing and I do not know this by *way of* observation. The *way* that I know I am doing something intentionally is not a way of knowing that is characteristic of my observing my own doings. This characteristic of intentional action as known not by matter of observation sets the stage for an enquiry into intentional actions. It demarcates a class of events. The class of things known not by matter of observation is quite an extensive one and is not restricted to intentional

[2] Ibid. 87.

actions. So we need a further tool to zoom in on these events within the broader class of things known without observation.

The conceptual tool that Anscombe provides us with to dig even deeper into this field is the observation that in describing something as an intentional action there ought to be an application of the appropriate sense of the 'Why?' question. When someone is doing an intentional action *X* she should be able to answer the question, 'Why are you *X*-ing?' The appropriate answer to the 'Why?' question specifies when this answer gives a reason for acting. Typically the reason why one is *X*-ing is some other reason *Y*. Questions such as, 'Why are you taking the cap of that bottle?' are answered by statements such as, 'Because I am thirsty'. The way to describe the relation between these further reasons and the description that is the *end* for what one is doing (in Aristotle's sense of *thelos),* is something I will come back to in my discussion of practical knowledge.

One of the things that come readily to mind in the descriptions of intentional actions is that there will be a subject of bodily movings[3] and certain mental states. In my reading of *Intention* I find that Anscombe constructs two action theoretical positions that she intensely argues against. The point of these constructions is to show what she is not trying to do in her theory. One might identify these accounts as the behaviouristic and the mentalistic explanation of intentional action. The psychological, mentalistic tendency approaches the subject by trying to describe what it is that is characteristic of having an intention and then to move from this characteristic to what it means to be acting intentionally. The physiological, behaviouristic tendency, on the other hand, will approach the subject by trying to find the characteristics of bodily movements that are intentional. Both of these 'theories' have a common ground in the idea that intentional action may be split, and that we

[3] I take Jennifer Hornsby's point of the transitive reading of the verb 'move' seriously. I will therefore refer to the 'movings' instead of 'movements' when I write about action (See: Hornsby, J. "Agency and Action" in Hyman, J, Steward, H (eds.) *Agency and Action.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

may talk about them in terms of bodily movings and some intentional feature. Splitting and reducing the subject, though, leaves out important aspect of the events known as intentional actions.

The physiological construction is a description of someone who defends the view that intentional action is primarily bodily movings plus some extra 'intentional' feature *I* that is attached to the event when it is done. Anscombe argues against this position by saying that this is simply a false starting point for an account of intentional actions. One cannot isolate the 'intentional feature'. Taking this starting point does not account for the fact that an action is intentional under some description. The 'intentional feature' is not a tool that enables us to know which description of the event we are discussing. As Ancombe writes,

> Since a single action can have many different descriptions, e.g. 'sawing plank', 'sawing oak', 'sawing one of Smith's planks', 'making a squeaky noise with the saw', 'making a great deal of sawdust' and so on and so on, it is important to notice that a man may know that he is doing a thing under a description, and not under another.[4]

In the description of someone operating a pump there is muscles contraction and relaxing. Even if one would add an *I* to this description of the working of the muscles, which would guarantee that an intentional action is performed, it still would remain an open question *under which* description *this* action was intentional. Clearly the *I* would be some kind of description, but which one?

> Clearly our symbol '*I*' must be interpreted as a description, or as having an internal relation to a description, of an action. But nothing about the man considered by himself in the moment of contracting his muscles, and nothing in the contracting of the muscles, can possibly determine the content of that description; which

[4]*Intetnion*. p. 11.

> therefore may be *any* one, if we are merely considering what can be determined about the man by himself in the moment.[5]

In starting with the bodily movings of contracting one's muscles there seems to be no way of describing which 'intentional feature' is the relevant one. Whether the *I* accompanying these bodily movings has anything to do with the wider description of what the agent is doing would be accidental. When an agent moves her muscles in a certain way she might be doing several different things, each of which is an intentional action of the agent at the moment of acting. She might for example both be clicking the rhythm of 'God Save the Queen' when operating a pump just for the fun of it, and poisoning the inhabitants at the same time. Both of these description of what she is doing is a description under witch it is intentional, but 'clicking out the rhythm' and 'poisoning the inhabitants' belong to two different chains of reasoning, and so the first cannot be reduced to the second. The order of intentional action, as being brought out by the 'Why?' question, or as some sort of means-end reasoning, which it could equally be described as, is not accounted for by saying that an event is intentional in virtue of some extra feature *I* that exists when it is done.

On the other hand, Anscombe describes an inclination to reduce intentional action to psychological states. The reason why it may be tempting to do this is that in a certain sense one is never in control of what happens. Even if I have decided to use the next hour to bake a cake it might for various reasons turn out that I do not have the necessary ingredients. I might be out of eggs, for example. Or a bomb not yet known to me might hit our building and extinguish me and my kitchen. In both these examples it seems that my having or not having an intention to bake a cake did not make any difference in the world of events. And so it might be tempting to say that the only description of an intention available to us is an event in the mind. However, by characterizing intentional action in terms of the inner mental state that

[5] Ibid. p. 28.

the agent has when acting, one will have difficulties in explaining how this state is related to descriptions of events in the world. As Anscombe writes:

> For if nothing guarantees that the window gets opened when I 'opened the window', equally nothing guarantees that my toe moves when 'I move my toe'; so the only thing that does happen is my intention; but where is that to be found? I mean: what is its vehicle? Is it formulated in words? And if so, what guarantees that I do form the words that I intend? for the formulation of the words is itself an intentional act. And if the intention has no vehicle that is guaranteed, then what is there left to be but a bombination in a vacuum?[6]

Turning intentional action into mental content is to reduce these kinds of events into something that would not make any difference in describing the state of the world. If what I want coincides with what actually happens, it would just be, as Anscombe puts it, a happy coincidence on my part. The tendency of psychological reduction makes the discourse on intentional action out of place. Descriptions of intentional action would not be any different than descriptions of any other event in the world. And so there would not be any point in talking of these events as something requiring a discussion on its own terms.

The Basic Construction

Anscombe's anti-reductive way of describing the nature of action is constituted by her way of approaching the subject in question. Her method does not consist of an analysis of 'intentional action' in order to find the necessary and sufficient characteristics of the concept. Instead her approach is characteristic in that she starts out from the intentional action.

[6] Ibid. p.52.

> All this conspires to make us think that if we want to know a man's intentions it is into the contents of his mind, and only into these, that we must enquire; and hence, that if we wish to understand what intention is, we must be investigating something whose existence is purely in the sphere of the mind; and that although intention issues in actions, and the way this happens also presents interesting questions, still what physically takes place, i.e. what a man actually does, is the very last thing we need consider in our enquiry. Whereas I wish to say that it is the first. With this preamble to go on to the second head of the division that I made in § 1: intentional action.[7]

After taking intentional actions as her starting point Anscombe proceeds to give her account of how to best describe them. That is, she finds some clear examples of intentional actions, for example operating a pump by moving your arm up and down, and from this she tries to describe the distinguishing traits in these events. In taking this procedure she avoids having to describe either a move from mind to world or a move from world to mind.

Anscombe does not start by attempting to get 'under the skin' of these events and say that first of all someone has an urge, or want for something. Neither is she a behaviourist saying that the only thing we can know in describing an intentional action is what really happened in terms of physical instantiations in this world. When Anscombe starts with the description of an intentional action, she neither has to introduce an agent into the physical world nor a world into the psychical world of wants. If one takes the insight from the 'Why?' question and adds the way of knowing characteristic for these events, namely the non-observational way, one will end up with a factive construction.

In Anscombe's theory the factive construction is the basic one. Factive is a grammatical term used to describe how certain verbs may signify that an embedded clause is represented as a fact. In doing something intentionally one has practical knowledge of what one is doing. To have practical knowledge is both a precondition and what is constitutive of intentional action. Practical knowledge is the outcome of

[7] Ibid. 9.

Anscombe's enquiry into the question 'Why?' and into the concept of non-observational knowledge. The description 'She replenished the water supply' is if true, a description of an intentional action. For the replenishing to be described as an intentional action, the agent cannot know she is replenishing the water only in the form of theoretical knowledge. In describing what she does as intentional, the agent says that she has practical knowledge of what she is doing. She knows the means-end structure that is the basis for describing something as an intentional action. In the description 'She intentionally replenished the water supply' the verb 'intentionally' is interchangeable with 'practical knowledge'. 'Intentionally' therefore represents the embedded clause 'She . . . replenished the water supply' as a fact. The verb 'intentionally', if true, presupposes the truth of the embedded clause 'She . . . *X*-ed'. When an embedded clause is represented as a fact in this way, this makes the construction factive.

If someone was not intentionally *X*-ing, but just hoping to *X*, the description of this person's relation to X-ing would be stated in a nonfactive construction. Even if the hope in 'She hopes that she was *X*-ing' is ever so intense the 'she' in this sentences may or may not be '*X*-ing'. I may hope that my solution to a certain mathematical problem is correct, but it might very well turn out that it's not. The nonfactive verb 'hope' represents the truth of the embedded clause as an open question. If the person only had a hope of pumping it might very well happen that nothing *happens* as a result of this hope. Somebody uttering this sentence does not oblige themselves to a special description of the events in the world. One may have a hope of something happening and yet do nothing towards achieving the object for the hope.

Although the statement 'She hoped she was X-ing' is a nonfactive notion, it is not a contrafactive one. A contrafactive statement is a statement such as 'She pretend she was *X*-ing'. The 'pretend' clause is normally taken to imply to its object '…she was *X*-ing' the status of not being true.[8] In saying that someone is

[8] In her paper 'Pretending' (In *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. p. 83.) Anscombe argues that the really good cases of pretending is when one does something and pretends to do something else. For example a thief may pretend to be a window washer in order to see if there is any goods

pretending to be doing the thing in the description of what she is doing, one is saying that the description given does not give the end for which one acts. In the description of someone pretending to operate a pump there is a claim to falsehood.

In starting with the factive notion, 'She X-ed intentionally', as the basic one, Anscombe firmly places the phenomena of intentional action into the class of things done for a reason. There ought to be something special about the description of these events if they are to be intentional. In order to say that something is a description of an intentional action the agent in question has to have knowledge of what she is doing in doing it and be able to answer the why question in the required sense. The basis of this standard for describing something as an intentional action is something I would like to enquire further in this paper.

When we give an account of an intentional action in the past tense we have an overview of the whole process that made this intentional act available. One may therefore reconstruct the argument that lead up to the event in question in the fashion of means–end reasoning. Such an overview is out of reach in the present tense. But then again an enquiry into intentional action in the past tense would be an enquiry into the intention of the action, that is, the intention with which an act is performed. In the very beginning of *Intention* Anscombe stresses the importance of being able to see the subject of intention under three heads. That is: as expression of intention for the future, as intentional action, and as intention in acting. In paragraphs 2–4 of *Intention* she attempts to start with the expression of intention for the future, she dismisses this as a plausible starting point and at the end of paragraph 4 she turns to intentional actions, writing that what humans actually do is the first thing that has

inside a house. Even if the description 'he is pretending to be cleaning the windows' fits him, the description 'he is cleaning the windows' is also a true description. In this paper Anscombe argues that purposive pretending is the basic way of pretending. With purposive Anscombe means that one is pretending to be something that one is not in order to get some kind of advantage. So, in this paper Ansombe argues against the claim that the statement 'She pretended to be X-ing' is nonfactive. My purpose of introducing a notion of 'pretending' at this stage of the enquiry, though, is only to demarcate the difference between a factive and a contrafactive statement.

to be considered.[9] She more or less deals with intentional actions until paragraph 31 where she introduces the discussion of mistake in performance. In paragraph 32 she links the concept of mistake in performance to the concept of 'practical knowledge'. In paragraph 33 she writes that one can only understand 'practical knowledge' if one first understands what is meant by 'practical reasoning'. With the introduction of 'practical reasoning' she takes up the subject of 'intention in acting' from the first paragraph of the book.

In reconstructing the practical argument Anscombe goes beyond mere intentional action. The reconstruction of the practical argument is only available when the action or the 'thing wanted' is completely attained. That it is 'completely attained' means something like 'I want to pass my exams, so I am reading this book', and I really pass my exam, and me reading that book really was something that helped when I was examination. We may then re-describe this event in terms of a practical argument.

> This question 'What do you want?' was not a question out of the blue, like 'What are the things you want in life?' asked in a general way at the fireside. In context, it is the question 'With a view to what you are doing X, Y, and Z?' which are what he is doing. That is to say, it is a form of our question 'Why?' but with a slightly altered appearance. If a man is asked *this* question about what he is doing, that 'with a view to which' he does it is always beyond the break at which we stopped in §23. For even if a man 'is doing' what he 'wants', like our imaginary teacher, he has never completely attained it, unless by the termination of the time for which he wants it (which might be the term of his life).[10]

I do not deny that Anscombe also gives an account of intention in acting, which she explains in terms of a means–end order. Neither do I have any intention of denying that the three division of the subject that Anscombe gives in the first paragraph is

[9] *Intention. p*. 9.

[10] Ibid. p.63.

something much more then a tool for grasping the subject, and that very often these cases are not so easy to distinguish from one another. The only thing I am saying is that intentional action in the past tense is not her starting point, and as far as I can see she is very much correct in not taking this as her staring point. The staring point, the basic, factive construction is in the present tense. It is *this* intentional action happening *here and now*. Not until she has developed an account of intentional action can she turn to the intention with which one acted. In my reading of Anscombe this is a crucial choice the impact of which on her theory cannot be overestimated.

In the following and second section of this paper I will discuss Ansombe's concepts of non-observational knowledge. The claim is that in doing something intentionally we typically know what we are doing in doing it in a non-observational way. In this way Anscombe characterise knowledge as the mental state in doing something intentionally. In the third section I will discuss what some important pre-conditions for acting. The fourth section will concern the special question 'Why?' The point of this question is to reveal the order that is present when we act intentionally. In *Intention* the point of this question is introduced by way of confronting it with some examples of events. I will follow the same procedure when introducing the question 'Why?' The focus of the fifth and last section will be the concept of practical knowledge. In having ready at hand the conceptual tools that Anscombe has provided us with I think we are better equipped to give an account of what the field of practical knowledge is. To give an account of practical knowledge I will have to say something on the subject of practical reasoning. Even if I generally sympathise with Anscombe's project, there are features in it in relation to which I will choose a somehow different path than what Anscombe would suggest. My primary task, though, is to get to a richer understanding of the nature of intentional action through a reading of Anscombe.

Part Two

NON-OBSERVATIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

The Characterisation of intentional Action

In this section of the paper I will try to describe how Anscombe approaches the subject of intention by starting with factual descriptions of events in the world, saying that the way we know that we are doing these things is by way of non-observational knowledge. With the concept of 'non-observational knowledge', Anscombe wants to delimit this special class of events by giving a first characteristic of what it means to act intentionally. Non-observational knowledge is later to be described as part of the concept of practical knowledge. In having non-observational knowledge you know what you are doing in doing it. In acting you known that you are and the way you know is not by matter of observation. So, Anscombe in this way characterise intentional actions by matter of how one knows what one is doing and the object for the concept is activity in the world.

To understand what someone's intention is, Anscombe writes at the end of paragraph four, the first thing to consider is what she actually does. When describing our observations of what someone is doing we are strongly inclined to refer to some of the intentions she had in doing what she did. An act is an event and as such it has a place in the causal world of events.

> I am referring to the sort of thing you would say in a law of court is you were a witness and were asked what a man was doing when you saw him. That is to say, in a very large number of cases, your selection from the immense variety of true statements about him which you might make would coincide with what he could say he was doing, perhaps even without reflection, certainly without adverting to observation.[11]

[11] Ibid. p.8.

Even though an eyewitness is very likely to refer to some true things about what intention someone had in acting by referring to observation, it is not the case that we can always know whether something is an intentional action just by matter of observation. There is a case where two people might perform almost the same bodily movings, let's say slipping on a banana peel, where the first person performs an intentional action, and the second has an accident. In the first case the person slipping is a good actor who can control her bodily movements in such a way that she can convincingly pretend to slip. At this point we cannot use an explanation that relies on a distinction between accidental and intentional. Anscombe introduces the concept of non-observational knowledge in relation to questions of how to distinguish the bodily movings that are intentional from those that are not, without involving the concept of 'intending' or 'acting for a reason'.[12] This is obviously important to her theory since starting with either of these concepts would be begging the question. In the opening of paragraph eight Anscombe states,

> What is required is to describe this class without using any notions like 'intended' or 'willed' or 'voluntarily' and 'involuntarily'. This can be done as follows: we first point out a particular class of things which is true of a man: namely the class of things which he *knows without observation.*[13]

So, in doing something intentionally we have non-observational knowledge of what we are doing in doing it. This means that it is not essentially by way of observation I know, for example, what I am writing in writing something. Even with my eyes closed I may say that I know I am writing A-C-T-I-O-N on this paper in front of me. That is, if this is a true description of what I am doing. It is almost always the case

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[12] Richard Moran, 'Anscombe on "Practical Knowledge"', in *Agency and Action,* Hyman, J, Steward, H (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[13] *Intention*, p.13.

that what I say that I write will appear on the paper. Since it almost always will appear on the paper, this is enough in order to make a knowledge claim about the matter. The way I know, that is to say, the non-observational way, what I am writing in writing it is characteristic of intentional agency.

> A very clear and interesting case of this is that in which I shut my eyes and write something. I can say what I am writing. And what I say I am writing will almost always in fact appear on the paper. Now here it is clear that my capacity to say what is written is not derived from any observation.[14]

The class of things known not by way of observation certainly has to meet the requirement of truth. This requirement is the same for both an eyewitness observing an event and a person doing something. If no words appear on the paper or if the word that appears is ‘intention’ instead of ‘action’, then the description that the agent gives of what she is doing as writing ‘action’ on a piece of paper is simply erroneous. This similarity between the rapport of the eyewitness and the agent in well working cases is due to that theoretical and practical knowledge has the same object. And this object is subject to the same truth constraints whether we are dealing with knowledge through observation or non-observational knowledge.

Even though non-observational knowledge is characteristic of intentional agency this does not imply that intentional actions are the only thing we can know by matter of non-observational knowledge. The class of things known without observation is quite an extensive class, and it is certainly not restricted to intentional actions. Rather, the class of intentional actions is a sub-class of the things known non-observationally. Another thing belonging to this class is a priori knowledge. You may say that the way you know that two plus two is four is a way of knowing that is not characteristically

[14] Ibid. p.53.

observational. The knowledge one has of ones own thought content also belongs to the class of non-observational knowledge.

Right now I am thinking about the future US president. That this thought is ‘in my mind’ does not involve any claim that it has nothing to do with the world. The thought about ‘the future US president’ is not something that should be described in terms of an isolated instant. Rather does this thought come within a cluster of other and related thoughts. In thinking for example of Barack Obama, this thought may involve Obama’s looks, the main ideas of the democratic movement, his family, what will happen with the Us when he is in charge, Hilary Clinton, the history of the Afro-Americans and so forth. All of these thoughts are related to there being a world where they are derived.

The way I come to think of Mr. Obama right now does not have to come from anything I observe in the world. I may start thinking of him because I first thought about Martin Luther King. These examples that come to mind when one thinks about ‘non-observational knowledge’ may seem to be something within the mind. In order to show that ‘non–observational knowledge’ may very well be of something that occupyies a physical space in the world, Anscombe introduces her first example in this category. The first explicit example of ‘non-observational knowledge’ in intention is the knowledge you have of the position of your limbs. Her claim is that one normally knows the position of ones limbs, and the way in which one knows it is not through observation.

When one knows something by way of observation, the way in which one knows it is by using observational faculties, that is, by using one’s senses. I observe that there is a cat outside my window. I know it is a cat because I have seen cats before and *this* (I say pointing to the cat outside) is what they look like. It has the shape, colour and way of moving characteristic of cats. By listening attentively I may even hear how it is meowing at the bird on the fence. When one know something without observation one does not know this by using one’s senses. One cannot point to the phenomenon and say *this*.

When you know that your leg is bent you do not normally identify what a bent leg looks, feels, or sounds like and take that as the criteria according to which you say that you know this. When my legs are crossed I can safely say that I know they are. No cross-checking with reality by way of my senses is required for me to rightfully claim that 'I know they are crossed' when having my legs crossed. The ability to rely on one's legs position does have major practical impact on *knowing how to* act in order to get to the place one wants. Even if the non-observational knowledge of the position of one's limbs does have this practical impact, it does not on its own constitute knowledge of what one is doing. The description of the position of my limbs is not a description of an action.

Even if one normally does not know the position of one's limbs by way of observation, this does not imply that there is not a possible situation in which one gains knowledge of the position of one's legs by way of observation. Think of a person who is having an operation in the lower part of her body. She may get drugs injected before the surgery so that it is only the body from her chest and down that is under an anaesthetic. She would then be fully conscious during the operation. She could mistakenly take it that her left leg is bent while it actually is lying straight. In seeing her leg though, she would correct her belief into something like 'I thought that my leg was bent while it was actually straight.'[15] Even if this person had to crosscheck her belief with observation of the world in order to get things right, this crosschecking is not the normal scenario. The normal truth condition required in order to make knowledge claims about the position of one's limbs are here not sufficient. This anaesthesia example is an odd example. Its strangeness shows that in everyday life the conditions on which we work on in saying that we know the position of our legs is normally non-observational.

[15] I thank Martine Nida-Ruemelin for this example.

Non-Observational Knowledge in Action

In *Intention* Anscombe gives an example of someone who paints a wall yellow meaning to do so.[16] In order to avoid mixing observational knowledge with non-observational knowledge, Anscombe removes his possibility of knowledge by denying him the observational faculty of sight. She paints the wall yellow with shuteyes. The reason why Anscombe lets this person operate with closed eyes is that the focus in the example is on non-observational knowledge. The agent must say what she has painted without adverting to observation. This does not imply that painting would be independent of observation in some way. The activity of painting a wall yellow involves knowledge based essentially on sensory experience, for example the feeling of holding a paint brush, the visual image of yellow, how the paint melts into the wall etc. In the process of learning how to paint a wall yellow she of course relied on sensory information. Without having this kind of sensory dependent knowledge the agent would not be able to form the intention of painting a wall yellow, and even less to know *how* to do it. Even if one learned how to do something X by way of one's sense, this does not imply that every time one does X one will have to check by way of observation that one really is doing X, in order to say that this is what one is in fact doing.

It seems as if our observational faculties play an important part in learning how to paint something yellow. But even though this is the case for this kind of activety, it does not seem to be a conceptual truth for all instances of non-observational knowledge. The knowledge how to do something is not necessarily gained on the basis of observation. The basis for knowing how to do something Y may for example be grounded in thought. It is therefore certainly not the case that everything we do is directly based on observation.

So it is not what the basis for knowledge is that is the distinguishing feature in non-observational knowledge contra observational dependant knowledge.

[16] Intention, p.50.

Non-observational knowledge may be based on observation or any of the other thing that knowledge normally is based on. In knowing what you are doing there is of course a reliance on how things normally work. This is the execution of the knowledge one has in doing the things one does. The basis for knowledge may have been arrived at by way of observation, but still one may claim that the *way* one knows what one is doing in doing it is not a matter of observation.

Even though sensorial input may play a role in learning *how to,* and so is a precondition for doing this intentional act *X,* this does not imply that the way one knows that one is doing *X* in doing it is not characteristically non-observational. One's history as a rational embodied agent enables one to say that one knows one is X-ing without referring to observation. That the basis of knowing what one is doing may be gained for example by matter of observation does not introduce any problem for Anscombe's account of the fact that in doing something intentionally we know what we are doing in doing it in a characteristically non-observational way.

In doing something intentionally, Anscombe claims, our observational faculties are merely an aid. The man who writes with his eyes shut may open his eyes and crosscheck whether what he thought he wrote actually appeared on the paper. Of course, in this way his observational abilities are very useful in the intentional act of producing successful writing. There are obvious factors that may cause one to fail to write something on a piece of paper with one's eyes shut. The pen might be out of ink, or it might be that my writing is stretching beyond the edge of the paper and onto the table. Even though one might fail, this does not mean that the person who shuts his eyes and writes something are not inclined to say that in writing he knows *that* he is writing and *what* he is writing. He is inclined to say this without referring to observation, because the essential thing he knows, that is, the knowledge of what he is doing in doing it, is known not by way of observation. "…the essential thing he does, namely to write such-and-such, is done without the eyes. So without the eyes he knows what he writes; but the eyes help to assure him that what he writes actually

gets legibly written."[17] If it turns out that he was wrong, for example thinking that he was producing successful writing while the pen was out of ink, then one simply says that he was wrong. What he thought that he knew was not a piece of knowledge after all. The truth criteria for making claims of knowledge also hold in non-observational knowledge.

A way to focus the 'non-observational character' way of knowing in actions, is to think of what happens when one is doing something, stops doing it, and then after a while continues on doing this thing. Here follows a description of such an event. A man is out shopping. On his way to the bakery he bump into this old friend from college that he has not seen for years. In his surprise and pleasure he completely forgets what he was up to. How can he get to the previous state of knowledge of what he was doing? The observation of his surroundings would not on their own tell him what he was doing. This does not mean that his observations of the surroundings could not remind him. Of course they could. In seeing that his friend have an baguette sticking up of his shopping bag, our man is reminded of what he was up to. In remembering he continues, after a while, on his way to the bakery in order to fetch the bread he wanted for dinner. When he met his friend, and lost the state of knowledge he had of what he was doing in walking around shopping, there is nothing he might observe, that could make him attain this state again. What he knew that he was doing, he knew in a non-observational way.

An example where someone makes clear that she does not have the knowledge required to describe an event as intentional is the example, which I take from Anscombe, of someone reacting to the ringing of a bell. 'By the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions I mean the knowledge that one denies having if when asked e.g. "Why are you ringing that bell?" one replies "Good heavens! I didn't know *I* was ringing it!"'[18] This reaction might be an example of someone who flips a

[17] Ibid. p.53.

[18] *Intention*, p. 51.

switch meaning to turn on the light, but who does not know that the switch she flips actually makes the bell ring. It might also be the reaction of someone who leans against a wall and in so doing presses her shoulder on the button that cause the ringing of the bell. In both of these readings, though, the one who is pushing the button has a false opinion or no opinion about the causal connection between what she does and the thing happening. Without having such an opinion about the causal connection it is not possible to have non-observational knowledge of what one is doing in doing it, and so one cannot have the intention of ringing the bell. In giving the answer 'I didn't know I was ringing it!' to the question 'Why are you ringing that bell?' one characterise one's action as one done without non-observational knowledge of what one is doing in doing it.

So, Anscombe characterises intentional action by the epistemic conditions of someone who is doing the thing in question. She distinguishes between this way of knowing and the way an eyewitness observing the event would have known. This difference is not just a matter of access. The reason why I may say that the knowledge I have of what I am doing in doing it is different than the knowledge you have of what I am doing in doing what I am doing is not due to the fact that I have access to a certain inner mental space that you do not, nor that I have a richer knowledge of the physiological operations of my own body than you possibly could have. Let's say that you are a physiologist and have a much deeper and detailed knowledge of how bodies, including mine, work. Or it might be that you, for example, is an extremely skilled psychological detective and so may see the reason why someone is acting in a certain way only by matter of observation. Even in these cases it is correct to say that *how* you are getting to know what I am doing in doing it is different than the way I am getting to know this. The *way* of knowing is different. Her concept of knowledge without observation is a way of trying to get at this special *way* of knowing.

One may ask if the term 'non-observational knowledge' is an appropriate term for describing the characteristic features of this phenomenon. It might be that the concept of 'non-observational knowledge' may make it sound as if our observation of

the world does not have any impact on what we do. And so, at first hand acquaintance this concept might lead readers to think that Anscombe does not open up for knowledge based on observation in intentional actions. This is very far from Anscombes theory of what it is to act intentionally. In order to do something intentionally the premises you have for saying that you know how to do this may be based on observation. So, the danger involved in using the concept of 'non-observational knowledge' as that which characterise intentional agency is that it might have a tendency to be read as something very abstract and far from everyday conceptions of what is characteristic of these events.

The reason I think that the concept of 'non-observational knowledge' is draped in these words is that Anscombe wants to demarcate this way of knowing as a different way of knowing than the one in theoretical knowledge. The *way* one gets to know an object in theoretical knowledge, she claim, is precisely by matter of observation. I will get back to these questions in my final discussion on practical knowledge. I will argue that non-observational knowledge is one, if not the basic features in this type of knowledge.

Part Three

KNOWING !HOW TO?"

The Preconditions for Doing Something Intentionally

Intentional action presupposes a lot of knowledge. Not all of this knowledge is non-observational. The preconditions for having non-observational knowledge of what one is doing is knowledge of *how to do* something. This knowledge *how to* may be based on theoretical knowledge, a superstition, practical knowledge, or just simply anything on which you form your opinion. Having this kind of knowledge in place enables you to know your way about things in the world, that is, it enables you to act.

The description of someone going to town to buy things on a list is a description that ascribes a great deal of knowledge to the shopper. In order to do what he does he has to know how to read, be acquainted with the practise of buying things with money, be informed about what kinds of stores he has to go to in order to buy what he wants, the location of these stores, or how to find out where they are located (for example by asking), the approximate price of the things on the list so that he can bring enough money to buy these items etc. If the shopper were not familiar with what these different aspects of going to town and buy things on a shopping list means, he would not have the preconditions required to do something intentionally.

In order to act we rely on this landscape of knowledge. It is from within this landscape that we make our plans about what to do. The knowledge of how things work enables us to know how to act in order to get where we want. Normally, things tend to work according to our plans. The emphasis on the normal case when things work according to plan tends to be where Anscombe always starts out. In the normal case we can rely on the knowledge we have acquired through our past interaction with the world. This amounts to saying that intentional action to a certain extent presupposes a predictable world. With ‘predictable’ I do not mean that in order to do something intentionally you have to know exactly what will happen in the

world if you do these certain things. My point is rather that in order to do something intentionally you have to be able to trust the regularities in nature. To be able to trust regularities enables us to give a reason why we should take it that a certain event will follow from what one is doing. This is, I take it, quite a commonsensical point of view. ". . . we must have an idea how a state of affairs Q is a stage in proceedings in which the action P is an earlier stage, if we are to be able to say that we do P so that Q."[19]

To take an extreme example, what if the laws of nature were so rapidly changing that one did not know from one second to the next how gravity would behave. If one throws a basketball in such a world with the intention of hitting the net, this decision would not have any effect on saying which direction this ball most probably would take. I might just as well have the intention to throw the ball anywhere *but* the net. Having this or that intention would then be irrelevant for giving reason why the ball flew in the direction that it did.

In such a world, throwing a ball and hitting the net it would be almost like winning the lottery. Winning the lottery is not an intentional action. Even if participating in the lottery by buying lottery tickets and so forth is intentional, the chance of actually winning is very remote. When there is so little actual chance of success of getting the thing one want, it has an impact on how to describe what one is doing. The probability that someone would win the lottery is so slim that it would sound strange to describe what she is doing in winning the lottery as 'I meant to win the lottery'.

Even if winning the lottery is not an intentional action, however, it is an event that turns out the way she wants it because of something she did. She bought lottery tickets. That it turned out as it did is not something she could reckon with. In the basketball case there would be no previous history of how bodies behave in relation to each other to rely on. There is a similar absence of a previous causal

[19] Ibid. p. 36.

history on which to base one's plans in the basketball example and the lottery example. The chance that forming the intention would have any effect on what happens is very slight in the lottery case and even slighter in the basketball case. Performing an intentional action is nothing like throwing a ball into a net without being able to rely on the workings of gravity. The fact that things are predictable is an important aspect in Anscombe's theory of intentional action. That what will happen is something on which we may base our plans is somewhat what makes non-observational knowledge in acting possible.

I gather that normally we can trust that we understand what other people are doing and that they understand what we are doing. I think that it is this understanding that makes collaboration and collective intentions possible. Collaboration depends on communication between agents. That there is normally a match between how an agent describes her intentional action and how her fellow citizens describe the same event is one of the pillars of communication.

Descriptions of intentional actions, if true, are description of something that has happened in the world. This can be seen as a truth constraint on the subject of these events. The reason why we as agents can operate in this world is that we can rely on what we have learnt through previous experience. We can rely on the knowledge we have acquired because it has shown itself to be reliable. This way of taking seriously the human situation is something I find to be a suitable starting point to give an account of human agency.

> I am sitting in a chair writing, and anyone grown to the age of reason in the same world would know this as soon as he saw me, and in general it would be his first account of what I was doing; if this was something he arrived at with difficulty, and what he knew straight off were precisely how I was affecting the acoustic properties of the room (to me a very recondite piece of information), then communication between us would be rather severely impaired.[20]

[20] Ibid. p.8.

In order to do something intentionally we have to be able to rely on our knowing how things work. In acting we may therefore trust that things will work according to plan. If there were no regularities in how things behave on which to work upon, there would be no reason for doing what we do. It would be like throwing a ball with the intention of hitting a net without being able to rely on the laws of gravity. Whether we have an intention or not would not make any difference in the course of events.

Part Four

THE QUESTION !WHY?"

The Order of Acting Intentionally

To dig even further into the structure of the events known as intentional action Anscombe provides us with a helpful tool. The purpose of this tool is to reveal the order in intentional action. This order, together with the non-observational knowledge is, according to Anscombe, what constitutes intentional action as such.

To say what is really involved in doing something intentionally, according to Anscombe, there should be a way that a relevant sense of the question 'Why?' is granted application. But what is the relevant sense of this question? Well, Anscombe writes that when it is given application in this sense, it in some sense gives a reason for acting.

> What distinguishes actions which are intentional from those which are not? The answer that I shall suggest is that they are the actions to which a certain sense of the question 'Why?' is given application; the sense is of course that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason for acting.[21]

When we act intentionally we are typically able to give reasons for the things we do, so this seems to be a good starting point. But to fill in the concept of reason might seem a bit difficult. What the 'reasons for acting', and what the 'relevant sense of the question "Why?"' is, are the same question. What both of these questions ask is what intentional action is, and it seems that characterising intentional action by way of reason doesn't add anything. We cannot yet fill in the content of these descriptions.

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[21] Ibid. p.9.

What sense of reason is involved at this stage of the enquiry is unclear. So at this point, it seems as if the attempt to give this further characterisation falls flat to the ground.

In order to see the difficulty involved in finding a definition of ‘reason’ at this point Anscombe introduces the example of someone who knocks a cup off the table. This example shows that the ability to give reasons for one’s actions does not make an action intentional. When the person knocking a cup off the table, she may answer the ‘Why?’ question with ‘I thought I saw a face in the window and it made me jump’. In everyday discourse one might say something like spotting the face in the window was the ‘reason’ for one’s knocking the cup off the table. So at first it might seem as if the agent in giving a ‘reason’ for her doings has given an answer to the question ‘Why?’ in the appropriate sense. Still we would not normally call knocking the cup off the table at the sight of a face in the window an intentional action. So what we have here is an example of a situation where a person may answer the question ‘Why?’ and give a ‘reason’ for her acting, but we would not call such acting intentional. This description of an event opens for a discussion of what is required in order for something to be a reason in the intentional sense. Why isn’t the description in the example a description of an intentional action?

The reason why this action is not intentional is that the ‘reason’ given in answering the question ‘Why?’ in this example is not the sense of reason in intentional action. It is not an example of an intentional action because it cannot be reconstructed as a means–end argument. Clearly the thing done, jumping at the sight of a face in the window cannot be described as an end. As it stands, though, we do not have a clear understanding of the intention in the present tense nor the past tense. So, neither can we explain ‘jumping at the sight of a face in the window’ as an event that does not have an intention with which one acted, nor can we dismiss this event because it is not done for the right reasons.

Even though the answer ‘I thought I saw a face in the window and it made me jump’ provides the ‘reason’ for the event it does not provide the *reason for*

acting, which are the sense of reason that one is here chasing. How does one distinguish between ‘mere reason’ and ‘reason for acting’? Since this is an enquiry into intentional action, we do not yet have a clear concept of acting, and so we cannot rely on a distinction between ‘reason’ and ‘reason for acting’. Both the concept of reason and the concept of acting are at this stage of the enquiry still unclear. If we relied on such a distinction we would be begging the question. We would be using the concepts of an understanding of which this enquiry aims to give. Treating the concepts under enquiry as given does not move us closer to an understanding of the nature of action. Instead we would in treating these concepts as given be moving in a circle. Only when we are able to distinguish between the two different senses of ‘reason’ without involving the concept of acting, we might perhaps discover what *acting* in the intentional sense of the word means. ‘We need to find the difference between the two kinds of “reason” without talking about “acting”; and if we do, perhaps we shall discover what is meant by ‘acting’ when it is said with this special emphasis.’[22]

In order to find this sense of *reason* that is involved in *acting* Anscombe tries a negative approach, and start off by trying to find the relevant sense of the question ‘Why?’ by showing where the question is refused application.

> To clarify the proposed account, “intentional actions are ones to which a certain cense of the question ‘Why’ has application”, I will both explain this sense and describe cases shewing the question *not* to have application. I will do the second job in two stages because what I say in the first stage of it will be of use in helping to explain the relevant sense of the question ‘Why?’.[23]

There is, according to Anscombe, three sorts of answers where the question is refused application. The first case is where the answer is ‘I was not aware I was doing that’,

[22] Ibid. p.10.

[23] Ibid. p.11.

the second case is when it is given the answer ‘I observed that I was doing that’, and the third cases where the question ‘Why?’ is shown not to have application is in cases where the answer has no room for Anscombe’s notion of mental causality.

The First Rejection of the Question !Why?"

So, the first case says that if the ‘Why?’ question is asked about some action X, and the question is given the answer ‘I was not aware I was X-ing’, then X is not a description of an intentional action. ‘This question is refused application by the answer: “I was not aware I was doing that”. Such an answer is, not indeed a proof (since it may be a lie), but a claim, that the question “Why did you do it (are you doing it)?”, in the required sense, has no application.’[24] . In answering that one was unaware of one’s doings under the description X, one claims the question under the description of X is not of any application.

If someone is intentionally doing something, let’s say Y, then there has to be at least one description under which she knows she is doing Y. It might of course be that in knowingly doing Y, she also does other things, such as P, Q, and R, but if she does not know what she is doing under the description P, Q, and R, then these are not descriptions under which her actions are intentional. Anscombe’s point with this first rejection of the ‘Why?’ question is that if the description of the event is not a description under which the agent would recognise it as intentional, then this simply is not a description of an intentional action. The agent has to be aware of this description of her as X-ing in order to say that she X-ed. One cannot do something intentionally that one does not know one is doing.

[24] Ibid. p.11.

> For this reason, the statement that a man knows he is doing X does not imply the statement, concerning anything which is also his doing X, he knows that he is doing that thing. So to say that a man knows he is doing X is to give a description of what he is doing *under which* he knows it.[25]

This point of 'knowledge under a description' does in some sense seem pretty obvious. When I bake a cake there is a whole range of descriptions of what I am doing. Some of these descriptions are descriptions of intentional action. It seems to be an essential feature of the descriptions of our intentional actions that we recognise these as descriptions of what we are doing. The question of what grounds, or what sort of knowledge that is required, on the other hand, seems more difficult to give an immediate answer to. Does Anscombe hold awareness to be a class of knowledge within the subject of intentions? The first rejection of the question 'Why?' may seem to point in that direction. What does she mean by *aware* in 'I was not aware I was X-ing'?

At first hand it may seem as if the claim of awareness is a weaker claim than the claim to knowledge. The reason why this may at first seem to be the case is, I take it, because we are inclined to think that we are talking of theoretical knowledge when we are discussing knowledge. In view of the field under inquiry, intentional action, I do not think that it is a weaker claim to say that one is aware of what one is doing under the description X than to claim knowledge of what one is doing under the description X. If the description 'He was aware that he was poisoning the inhabitants' is true, then he was poisoning them. If he had not been aware he was poisoning them, then there is no description of him as intentionally poisoning them. There is nothing that ought to be added to the claim that one is aware of what one is doing under this description, in order to claim that one knows one is doing this thing.

This touches on something I take to be quite central in Anscombe's theory; the basis for practical knowledge does not have to stand the same tests that

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[25] Ibid. p.12.

something that is described as theoretical knowledge. In order for something to be theoretical knowledge one may think that one should be able to go back and test whether the premises on which one draws one's conclusions are true. This kind of testing is not available in practical knowledge. Here the basis for the claim to knowledge may just be some kind of non-testable superstition or opinion. Even if the basis for knowledge is not testable in the same way in practical knowledge as in theoretical, the description of the object has to be in accordance with the truth in order to be knowledge

> . . . the topic of intention may be matter on which there is knowledge or opinion based on observation, inference, hearsay, superstition or anything that knowledge or opinion ever are based on; or again matter on which an opinion is held without any foundation at all. When knowledge or opinion are present concerning what is the case, and what can happen—say Z—if one does certain things, say ABC, then it is possible to have the intention of doing Z in doing ABC; and if the case is one of knowledge or if the opinion is correct, then doing or causing Z is an intentional action, and it is not by observation that one knows one is doing Z; or in so far as one is observing, inferring etc. that Z actually is taking place, one's knowledge is not the knowledge that a man has of his intentional actions.[26]

Is there any description where one is aware of one's doings under a description, but where one would say that this description is not a description of what one does intentionally? For example, would someone that is out walking after a heavy rainfall be aware that she will kill earthworms on her way through the forest. Even if she is aware of this fact she will be stepping on some earthworms, because her path is filled with them, it is not an intention with which she acts. She is not walking on this path in a rain dripping forest in order to kill earthworms. So even if I have knowledge or awareness of what will happen if I do certain things, and I do these things and what I thought would happen does happen, this does not imply that I intentionally stepped

[26] Ibid. p.50.

on earthworms. What happened under the description ‘killing earthworms’ was not something I did intentionally.

Anscombe’s purpose of introducing ‘awareness’ in a discussion of intention is certainly not that something is constantly occupying ones thoughts. I am aware that the sum of the tickets I ordered on the Internet will be drawn from my bank account within the next few hours. That I may rightfully say that I am aware that this is the case does not mean that I will have this thought in my mind all the time in order to be aware of it. Intentional action is never just an interior movement of thoughts. To be aware of what one is doing is to know what one is doing under this description. It is awareness of activity, not just awareness of thought content. Intentional actions are things that you do because you want them in some way to happen. This is the reason why practical knowledge should be described as something that has a different sort of direction than theoretical knowledge.

> For after all we can *form* intentions; now if intention is an interior movement, it would appear that we can choose to have a certain intention and not another, just by e.g. saying within ourselves: ‘What I *meant* to be doing is earning my living, and *not* poisoning the household’; or ‘What I *mean* to be doing is helping those good men into power; I withdraw my intention from the act of poisoning the household, which I prefer to think goes on without my intention being in it’. The idea that one can determine one’s intentions by making such a little speech to oneself is obvious bosh.[27]

A person who knowingly pumps a poisonous substance into the water supply of a building cannot withdraw her intention from poisoning the inhabitants if pumping this substance is a means to an end for her. Making an inner speech with the purpose of deciding what the intention in the event was does not make any difference on how to describe this event. If what she does, pumping the poisonous substance, is a means to the end, helping the good men into power, then she cannot withdraw her intention

[27] Ibid. p.42.

from poisoning the inhabitants. If one could decide one's intention in this way, then intentions should be described as an interior movement, which is precisely the view that Anscombe dismisses. The meaning of awareness in 'I was not aware I was X-ing' is not something that should be given an inner explanation. If you are doing Y as a means to attain Z, then you cannot withdraw your intention of doing Y by saying to yourself that all you ever wanted was to Z. If you are doing something as a means to something else, you are aware that the description of these things you do is the means to this other thing that is your end.

Anscombe operates with some restrictions on when one may give the answer, 'I was not aware I was X-ing' as a rejection of the question 'Why?'. When it can be given depends on what description X is supposed to represent in the case. In some cases, further information is required in order to see what the agent may mean in giving 'I was not aware I was X-ing' as an answer. If, for example, you saw someone butter a toast, and you ask this person 'Why are you buttering the toast?' whereupon she answers 'I was not aware I was buttering the toast' it may be difficult to understand what this person means. Maybe the explanation of her answer is that she is not familiar with the concepts of 'butter' or 'toast'? This would make sense. But if she understands the content of the sentence, and the description given in the 'Why?' question was a description of what she did, what could she possibly mean by the answer 'I was not aware I was doing that' under these circumstances?

It seems that normally when buttering a toast such an answer would be somewhat unintelligible. By unintelligible I mean almost beyond interpretation. If I came in to my kitchen one morning and saw my partner sitting at the kitchen table buttering a toast I would have difficulties understanding what he meant if I asked the 'Why?' question and was given the reply 'I was not aware that I was buttering a toast'.

On the other hand, if I knew that his dearest friend died in a car crash the previous night, and that my partner had just received this message, then I would not find his answer unintelligible. In being informed of something as violently shocking

as the death of someone dear in a car accident, one may act without awareness of what one is doing. Dismissing the 'Why?' question in these circumstances does not prove his action as unintelligible. This extra information about the circumstances fills in what may be seen as a gap between the description of what he is doing and the answer he gave to the 'Why?' question. Let us say that my partner is buttering his toasts every morning. When he is doing it now, without being able to answer the 'Why?' question, we can make sense of his answer. An understanding of the special sort of emotional state my partner is in makes the dismissing of the 'Why?' question in these circumstances reasonable. The agent does not have the relevant knowledge for claiming that the buttering of the toast was an intentional action. The question of what actually happens when one acts in a way that is typical of means-end acting, but where there is no such directedness (one does these things in a automatic way),is not part of this enquiry, and so I will not deal with them any further in the course of this paper.

The Second Rejection of the Question 'Why?'

The second case where the question 'Why?' is shown not to be applicable is where the answer implies 'I knew I was doing that, but only because I observed it'. The characteristic of intentional action as known by way of observation dismisses this answer as an answer that one would give in relation to intentional action. When the only account of knowledge of what is happening is based on observational evidence, then the action in question is not intentional. In giving this answer to why one did a certain thing, one is saying that one did not have the relevant knowledge for doing something intentionally.

An example that Anscombe gives of a situation where the 'Why?' question may be answered in this way is the answer someone who notices that she operates the traffic light in crossing the road might give.[28] In crossing the road she

[28] Ibid. p.14.

notice that the light immediately turns green for the ones walking. She takes it that these lights work in the way that when someone starts walking across the street, there are sensors that detects the movement and which gives information to the mechanism of the lights to turn green for the ones walking. In being asked 'Why are you operating the lights?', she may answer 'I knew I was doing that, but only because I observed it' The way she learned how the traffic light worked is by way of observation, and she cannot answer the 'Why?' question about this event with that she crosses the road *in order to* operate the traffic lights. This answer is not possible because she did not have the knowledge of the working of these lights required in order to form the intention of operating the lights in crossing the road. She did not know how to operate these lights, and she did not have non-observational knowledge of what she was doing in doing it. In intentionally doing something there has to be at least one description of what one is doing under which one knows what one is doing. This description cannot be a description of something that one knows only by matter of observation, which is the case for someone who notices they are operating the traffic lights in crossing the road.

The Third Rejection of the Question 'Why?'

The third case when the question 'Why?' is not applicable is when it receives the answer 'It was involuntarily'. A problem with the notion of the involuntary is that in some cases it implies an understanding of the concept of 'intention' that are we here approaching. To see this consider the following examples: 'He withdrew his hand in a movement of involuntary recoil' and 'The involuntary benefit I did him by a stroke I meant to harm him'.[29] How is the 'it was involuntary' part a rejection of the question 'Why?' in these cases? Since the concept of 'intentional action' is part of these examples, and it is into an understanding of this phenomenon this enquiry is headed, Anscombe leaves these cases of the involuntary aside.

[29] Ibid. p.13.

The notion of involuntary action that is here under question is the class of bodily movings in a purely physical description. Her example of the involuntary of this kind is ‘The odd sort of jerk or jump that one’s whole body sometimes gives when one is falling asleep’, or ‘The peristaltic movement of the gut’. Anscombe claims that the description of these happenings does not imply an understanding of the concept of ‘intentional action’. This class of voluntary actions may therefore be described without first having clarified the concept of ‘intentional action’.[30]

Characteristic of this third class of answers that are not admitted application to the ‘Why?’ question is that they have no room for reasons, nor what Anscombe calls ‘mental cause’. When Anscombe writes about a ‘mental cause’ she means an inner psychological thing that makes other things in the world happen. Characteristic of this third kind of rejection to the ‘Why?’ question is that one answer the question with things like, ‘“I don’t know if anyone knows the cause” or “Isn’t it something to do with electrical discharges?”’[31]

The notion of mental cause is not very important for an understanding of agency, because for Anscombe the rational structure is inherent in the concept of intentional action. In the notion of ‘mental cause’ there is no room for this sort of rational order. Still, it is important to have a fairly clear conception of what ‘mental cause’ means, so that one may distinguish it from what it means to have a reason to do something. In order to detect the mental cause of an action one asks the agent a *what* question instead of a *why* question. The question of what caused this person’s action is a question that the person claiming what she did was involuntary (in the strictly physical description of the term) cannot answer to.

> But it is important to have a clear idea of it, partly because *a* very natural conception of ‘motive’ is that it is what *moves* (the very word suggest that)–glossed as ‘what *causes*’ a man’s actions etc. And ‘what causes’

[30] Ibid. p.15.

[31] Ibid. p.25.

> them is perhaps then thought of as an event that brings the effect about–though how it does–i.e. whether it should be thought of as a kind of pushing in another medium, or in some other way–is of course completely obscure.[32]

The example of someone who is confronted with the question ‘Why did you knock the cup off the table?’ and answers, ‘I thought I saw a face at the window and it made me jump’, is an example of someone who gives a mental cause but no reason. Even though one in everyday language may say that ‘the reason why I knocked the cup off the table was that I saw a face in the window and it made me jump’, the use of the word ‘reason’ in these circumstances is, according to Anscombe, just a simplification. These kinds of simplifications are common in everyday language and there they do not normally introduce any problem. What made her knock the cup off the table, though, should actually not be described as a reason. Rather this event is better described as an impulse. It is a sort of event where there was no planning that leads up to it.

The difficulties in explaining why the answer ‘I thought I saw a face at the window and it made me jump’ is not admissible as a response to the ‘Why?’ question show some of the importance of demarcating this class of events. It is important to know which answers give a mental cause rather than a proper reason, so that one does not mix these answers with answers that give a reason for an action. In Anscombe’s theory a ‘mental cause’ cannot be a ‘reason’. The notion of ‘mental cause’ should be understood as something like a mechanical link between what happens in the mind and what the agent does. The agent sees a face in the window, which gives her a sudden jerk that makes her move her arm, which knock’s the cup off the table. The connection between the sudden start and the knocking off the cup may be explained in using mechanical terms.

[32] Ibid. p.18.

That one's actions is part of a calculative chain, as opposed to a mere response, is what Anscombe takes as that which distinguishes acting on the basis of 'reason' from acting for a 'mental cause'. Intentional action is part of a calculative chain, and amongst other things this means that an act is described as something that has meaning and value that an agent has dwelt on. A responsive doing on the other hand is an event that just happens, without the agent giving it any previous thought or reflection. As made evident with the example of the person who knocks a cup off the table when seeing a face in the window, in everyday language we tend to mix our reasons for acting with our mental causes for doing something.

> . . . the more the action is described as a mere response, the more inclined one would be to use the word 'cause'; while the more it is described as a response to something as *having a significance* that is dwelt on by the agent in his account, or as a response surrounded with thoughts and questions, the more inclined one would be to use the word 'reason'.[33]

In *Intention* Anscombe operates with a distinction between 'mental cause' and 'reason' and in my reading this distinction is crucial for an understanding of her theory of intentional action.

Here it should be noted that Anscombe's account of 'mental cause' is entirely different than her account of 'cause'. Even if the contrast between 'reason' and 'mental cause' is strict, the relation between 'reason' and 'cause' is blurred. Let me just start by saying that I find it hard to understand the notion of 'cause' that Anscombe is operating with in *Intention*. I do not find her entirely clear on this point. For one thing there is the grammatical confusion that she tends to write 'cause' when she obviously means 'mental cause'. In addition to this there is also the fact that she does not provide a clear theory of 'cause'. Intentional action, though, is descriptions of things that are being made to happen in the world. In order to move from the

[33] Ibid. p.23.

premises in the practical argument to the action, the thing happening, one somehow needs a concept of cause. I find that there is a causal connection in the chain of reasoning that leads up to the acting, which is the story Anscombe presents, but she is not clear about what exactly this connection consists of. In order to understand what Anscombe's notion of 'cause' in intentional action is, one must therefore look closer at what she has to say about these events.

The main thing that is characteristic of Anscombe's approach to agency is precisely that it is anti-reductive. I find that this anti-reductiveness is instantiated by her way of describing intentional action as something done for a reason, and I would like to add, by her anti-reductive way of dealing with cause. The chefs decision to make a cake may explain why she tapped eggs. That is, it gives a reason why she cracked the eggs. However, the baking of the cake is just one of all the possible interpretations of the cracking of the eggs. Other reasons may be that she wanted to mix the eggs with the sugar, that it was the second point in the recipe that she was following, that she was preparing in front of a competition, that she wanted to surprise her mother on her fiftieth birthday and so on. If asked the 'Why?' question, though, the Chef could explain her cracking of eggs as part of the calculative chain that leads to the cake being baked. Someone answering the question 'Why?' concerning the cracking of some eggs with that 'The loud bark of that crocodile made me crack them', though, one would be more inclined to describe this doing as a mere response, that is as a 'mental cause', than as something which demand a place among reasons.

Even if the Chef gives a reason to the question 'Why?' she cracked eggs, this does not mean to say that the baking of the cake is the final reason why the Chef cracked eggs. The reason with which one does something is the end for which the action is done. Anscombe's notion of the 'reason with which' is very similar to Aristotle's notion of final cause. As everybody knows, Aristotle speaks of different categories of causes. Something's final cause is what the thing in question is done *for*. The final cause is the end for which one acts. The end is the cause of an agent doing

the things he does, and it is the end for his why he does these things. In being given the end for why one do something, this gives a reason for acting.

> Further, something's end—i.e. what it is done for—is its cause, as health is of walking. For why does he walk? We say, 'To be healthy'; and in saying this we think we have provided the cause. The same is true of all the intermediate steps that are for the end, where something else has initiated the motion, as for example, slimming, purging, drugs, or instruments are for health; all of these are for the end, though they differ in that some are activities, while others are instruments.[34]

What I am aiming at in this discussion of the cracking of eggs is that in giving a chain of reasoning why one did something there is a relation between the reasons given in the chain and the description of the result in the world. There is a relation between the reason that the Chef gives for why she is cracking eggs and the eggs being cracked, the cake being baked and her mother is getting a nice surprise on her birthday. To some extent I find that one can describe this relation as a causal relation. It is through one's reasons that one bring's something about. A description of something as an intentional action is a description of an event in the world. This act is done for a reason. The relation between these reasons and how the world turns out needs a story of causality. I really cannot find any evidence through my reading of *Intention* that this would be a blind spot for Anscombe. Quite the contrary I find evidence that in *Intention* she lets our reasons be what in some sense is the cause of an event.[35] And as I think that the notion of 'cause' that is on the agenda here is something similar to Aristotole's notion of 'final cause'. This cause is the reason *for which* you acted.

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[34] Aristotle, *Physics*, book II, 194b35. (*Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle*)

[35] Note that I am here trying to defend the position that Anscombe's account of the relation between the reason the agent has for doing what she did and what she actually does is in some sense a causal relation. The notion of cause that is discussed here is not a notion only concerning our bodily movings, which is the notion of cause that Davidson propounds (see Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, volume 1, p. 60.).

Let us turn back to our baker. I think that most probably she would say that even if she could give this chain of reasons to the 'Why?' question, the reason *on which she acted*, was that she wanted to surprise her mother. So, without this reason, the event described as 'The Chef is cracking eggs', would not have happened. There is a whole range of things that has to take place in order for the Chef's intention of surprising her mother with a home made cake on her birthday, to be realised: she has to have the necessary ingredients; it really was her mother's birthday; no one will accidentally throw a basketball at his cake. So, it is not as if the 'reason for' is sufficient for the thing to happen. The point is rather that without this final reason or final cause, or whatever you choose to call it, the event would not take place. The event would not have happened, but neither would the chain of reasoning that lead up to this event have started. As an answer to the question of what caused the cracking of eggs the Chef could not only say that the eggs being hit against the hard edge of the porcelain bowl made them crack, but also that the eggs were cracked in order to make the cake with which she wanted to surprise her mother on her 50th birthday. In saying *that*, I will argue, she sais that her reason in some way caused the cracking of the eggs.

The story in *Intention* about 'cause' is a story that is closely related to the subject under discussion in the essay, that is intentional action. Note that this account, of acting with an end in view, is far from the account Hume gives of cause. Hume gives his empiricist theory of cause, where he proposes that *the* basis of our notion of 'cause' is found in our previous experience and habit.[36] From this we may induct a number of natural laws that function as ultimate causes and principles in nature. According to Hume the inferring from the observed to the unobserved is never made by any chain of reasoning. Given the Humean picture of what cause is, there is no room for a story of final causes that is both the end for which one acts and what guides our steps toward this end. In the Aristotelian–Anscombian story the reasoning

[36] Hume, David, *An inquiry Concerning Human Understanding.* (in Modern Philosophy. An Anthology of Primary Sources) Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1998.

leading up to an event is what makes intentional action happen. One may therefore say that this sort of cause is also occupied with reasons.

So, the picture Anscombe offers is anti-reductive in its dealing with cause. A different way to see this is by the fact that Anscombe does not have any problem with anomalous causal chains in the way Davidson has.[37] Think of the following example. I am lost in a large building in a country in which I do not know the language. I may now look for an exit. Let us say that after going up and down in different elevators, I still cannot find any sign with which I can find the way out. Eventually I end up in a room where there is a door, and next to the door there is a this green button with a printed E on it. I take it that the E is a symbol for 'exit' and so I walk towards it and push the button. The door opens and I can step out into the open air. Someone sees me and asks, 'Why did you push that button?'[38] Even if I might give reasons for what I did, these reasons might not pick out the right causal chain between the intentional action and what actually happened. The door opened because, let us say, there were some sensors in front of the door that were responsive to movement. Whenever someone walked towards the door, the sensors responded and sent messages so that the door opened. So, pushing the button did not make the door open, but the door still opened, and what you did (walking towards the door) was what made the door open. The focus of this example is Davidson's concept of deviant causal chains. The problem with anomalous causal chains is something like this: you have a reason for doing what you do (you want to open that door, and you have past experience according to which pushing green buttons with capital Es on them have made doors open), you push the button (you do something), the door opens (what you wanted turns out to be a description of the world), but in fact it is not the pushing of the button that makes the door open. The reason why you did something does not pick out the right causal connection between what you did and what

[37] See Davidson, Donald, *Essays on Action and Events*, OUP, Oxford, 1980.

[38] I thank Martin Gustavson for this example.

happened. One way to put it is that the cause failed to carry out the right intentional link.

Anscombe does not have a problem with deviant causal chains. In explaining action, the primary thing for Anscombe is not to describe the relation between what the man did and what happened. For Anscombe it is enough to describe what one does as a means to an end in order to describe it as something one does intentionally. In the example I referred to above, one could say that the man did something because he wanted the world to turn out in a special way, and the world actually turned out the way the man wanted, because of what he did. Stating the right causal connection is not what an account of intentional action is mainly about, one could imagine Anscombe saying. The focus of doing something intentionally should be on the ability to give reasons for what we do. These reasons count in favour of doing something. One could say that when it comes to questions of 'cause', Anscombe's story is much more Aristotelian, where Davidson's is more Humeian.

Even though there is a distinction between 'mental cause' and 'reason', Anscombe writes that in many cases operating on this distinction is pointless. It is pointless because some events could and should be given an explanation of both kinds. In order to show to show how some events should be given explanation of both of these kinds, she comes up with this example:

> Now, however, let us consider this case:
>
> Why did you do it?
>
> Because he told me to.[39]

The example as it is presented in the quote above is very open. As it stands it is difficult to say whether it is a description of an event demanding a 'mental cause' or a

[39] *Intention*, p. 23.

‘reason’ explanation. In trying to give flesh to the this skeleton of an example Anscombe writes that we should imagine that this is a description of a situation where someone hung their hat on a peg because her host said, ‘Hang up your hat on that peg’. On questions about how to describe this event Anscombe writes that it might be described as something done both for a ‘mental cause’ and for a ‘reason’.

It depends on the circumstances in which the answer occurs whether we should describe it as one thing and not another. Anscombe tries to answer those who possibly would argue that this event is clearly an intentional action and not just the sort of event that has a ‘mental cause’ by saying that understanding the words involved does not make an action intentional. I will argue that there could be other reasons, besides understanding the words involved, why claiming that this is an example of an action done for a reason and not just an event with a mental cause.

In hanging up one’s hat because one’s host tells one to, one normally does so because one is relying on a history of conventions and norms, for example that when one is a guest one should try to please one’s host by being polite and do what one is told as long as doing this does not go against one’s convictions, or that one should not be wearing headgear indoors etc. Understanding norms like these is not equivalent to just understanding the words involved. Rather understanding such norms is the reason for taking one’s hat off when one’s host tells one to. If one did not have a clue of what the content of these norms and social conventions were, one could of course not act according to them.

One might try to describe the hanging up of one’s hat because one’s host says so in terms of ‘mental cause’, if one performed this action almost before one had the time of thinking about what one was doing, for example because of the tone of voice of the host saying, ‘Hang up your hat’. One might then describe hearing the host’s tone of voice along the lines of spotting a face in the window. Hearing the voice makes one start, and before you know it you have hung up your hat on the peg. In this way we might try to describe the event more in the terms of a mere reaction. The agent in this description does not only show that she has knowledge of the

content of the words the host utters, she also shows that she know how to act according to these words.

As said above, the *know how* is a pre-condition for acting intentionally. In the description of knocking a cup off the table at the sight of a face in the window there is no way of describing the knowledge that lead up to this event. The person acts on an impulse and not on a reason. There seem to be some difference in the epistemic conditions between this example and the one with hanging up one's hat because one's host tells one to.

Even if I find difficulties in the way Anscombe instantiates the example of how doing something because somebody tells you to can be both descriptions of actions done for a 'mental cause' and a 'reason', I do find that she is largely right in her main argument that is the purpose of her example. In some cases in describing an event it is difficult to know what sort of explanation one should give.

An additional description of an action where this may seem difficult is this example: 'Why did you stopped biking?' 'Because she told me to'. Let us say that the person who is asked the 'Why?' question in this example is a six-year-old girl who is just about to cross the street with her bike, and that 'she' refers to her mother. Just when she is about to cross the street a car is coming. I find that for this example there exist possible descriptions of this situation in which the child's action could be accounted for in terms of a mental cause and as something done for a reason. Let us add to this description that a car was approaching and the child was so focused on riding her bike that she did not notice it.

There are at least four different descriptions of the way the mother told the daughter to stop. Firstly, she could have turned her bike so that its wheels literally stopped the daughter's bike. Secondly, she could just have uttered something that best could be described as a primitive sound, which gave the child a sudden start so that she fell off the bike. Thirdly, the mother could have screamed out the words 'Stop there is a car coming!' in the manner of a general giving an order. Fourthly, she could have said in a calm voice something like, 'look over there, there is a car coming.

What have I told you to do when you are out biking and there is a car coming?' In all of these four descriptions, except the first one, the child could give the answer 'Because she told me to' in facing the question 'Why?' It seems that a further elucidation is needed if we are to see if these situations are examples of someone acting for a reason or whether the action is better explained in the terms of a mental cause.

In the first description of how the mother told the child to stop her bike the child did not stop because for a reason. Rather, the mother physically stopped the wheels of her daughter's bike to move by setting the wheels of her bike right in front of the wheels of the daughters bike. The next description I find that there is a mental cause that explains what happens. Falling off one's bike on hearing one's mother scream is a description of an event that is very similar to knocking a cup off by the sight of a face in the window. These events give one a sudden start that makes 'knocking the cup over', and 'falling off the bike' happen. In the first two descriptions there is no chain of reasons for why the child acted in the event as she did.

In the third example it is difficult to say whether the child acts because of a mental cause or a reason. When the mother shouts the order that the daughter should stop because there is a car coming, the child could respond to this order in various ways: she might stop because of the tone of voice that her mother uses; the way the child's act could then be seen as similar to the way a soldier acts when a general screams an order; she might stop because she wants to please her mother; because she knows that the car represents a danger to her and so the safest thing to do is to stop her bike; or the reason for her stopping the bike is a mix of her mother's tone of voice, her mother authority, and her wish to be obedient to her mother's will. It is difficult to single out one reason for the child's action, and it is very likely that the child too would have problems in giving one reason for her action in this case.

The fourth example is most clearly an example of an intentional action. The child would most likely give a rational, calculative answer to why she acts as she

does. So overall we may say that in the example: ‘Why did you stopped biking?’—‘Because she told me to’, there seems to be a difference in degree whether the action should be described as something done out of a cause or for a reason. What this shows is that there are examples of cases where the difference between cause and reason is not that clear cut, and I take it that in these cases one should not try to force a clear distinction between cause and reason on them. The open character of these descriptions is and should be kept inherent in the description of them.

So to sum up, both the first and the second answer reject application of the question ‘Why?’ on epistemic grounds. If one is either not aware of one’s doings, or just knows them through observation one is not in the epistemic position that is required to claim that one acts intentionally. In the first case the answer is that the agent does not know she is doing the thing described in the question. This does not mean that there is no way of describing the event under which she knows it, it only means that she does not know her action under this description. For example, it may be that someone knows that she is sawing, but not that she is making a squeaky noise with the saw.[40] The description of her as sawing is a description of something she does intentionally. Even if this description of what she is doing is a description under which it is intentional this does not in itself make the description of her as making the squeaky noise into something she intentionally does. Making this noise is not something she intentionally does since she does not know she is doing it. That the description of her as making a squeaky sound with the saw is not intentional certainly does not imply that making this sound is something she does not voluntarily do.

In the third class of answers where the question ‘Why?’ is not applicable, the reason for not permitting them application is that bodily movings is given a purely physical description. When an answer to the question ‘Why?’ have no room for either mental causes or reasons then the event in question is not intentional under this description. When there is no room for either mental causes or reasons, the answer

[40] Ibid. p. 11.

does not fit the structure of the answers that gives a reason for acting. In the third class of answers that is not admitted application, there is no reason for why one acts as one does.

The point of the enquiry into cases where the question ‘Why?’ is not applicable is to get closer to what it means to act for reasons by dismissing the cases that do not give reasons in the appropriate sense, and I find that through this enquiry we have come closer to this aim. Overall I find that Anscombe’s arguments for why these three groups of answers is not applicable to the ‘Why?’ question to be quite convincing. Taken together I find that they essentially show what sorts of events that are not descriptions of intentional actions. This being so, I must also admit that sometimes I have difficulties in seeing what concept of knowledge and cause Anscombe operates with. I do not find her account on these matters to be as clear as I would have wanted it to be.

The Intermediary Cases

There is a group of answers that are somewhat parasitic on the answers that are applicable to the ‘Why?’ question, but which do not themselves give reasons in the sense that the primeary descriptions of intentional action do. That is, these answers depend on answers that provide reasons to be intelligible, but they are not in themselves answers of this kind. I have chosen to call them ‘intermediary’ because of their in-between status. There is some kind of a weaker concept of reason that is working in these cases.

> The answers to the question ‘Why?’ which give it an application are, then, more extensive in range than the answers which give reasons for acting. This question ‘Why?’ can now be defined as the question expecting an answer in this range. And with this we have roughly outlined the area of intentional actions.[41]

[41] Ibid. p. 28.

Anscombe writes that the answer to the question 'Why?' may be that there is no reason. She says that this answer does not imply that the question does not have application. How can this be the case? In this class of answers there is obviously no further reason for one's action, and so it may sound very similar to the third category of answers that were refused application to the 'Why?' question. I think that the reason why Anscombe admits this range of answers application to the 'Why?' question is because they do not dismiss that there is a mental cause. In accepting answers such as, 'I just thought I would' or 'It was an impulse' or 'For no particular reason' or 'It was an idle action—I was just doodling', as answers that are admitted application to the question 'Why?', one says that one understands what someone who answers the 'Why?' question in these circumstances may mean; he or she is not unintelligible for you. In paragraph fifteen Anscombe writes that the difference between a cause and a reason is blurred, and I find these examples to be of this 'blurred kind'. They are in the area in-between reasons and causes, and there is no need to categorise them as either.

Even though the question 'Why?' can be given answers of this kind, it does not mean that intentional actions may be characterised by only giving answers in this range. When an answer is a denial of a reason or a rational structure, one might still call the description a description of an intentional action, because this description is parasitic on the description given in the rational structure. "The question is not refused application because the answer to it says that there is *no* reason, any more than the question how much money I have in my pocket is refused application by the answer 'None'."[42] We understand what it means not to have a reason because we are familiar with the concept of reason, and what it means to have a reason. These answers to the 'Why?' question have a somewhat parasitic status compared to answers which give reasons. The answer to the question 'Why?' is in this respect more extensive in range then the answer that gives reasons for acting.[43] But it is

[42] Ibid. p. 25.

[43] Ibid. p. 28.

essential to understand that some actions are done with an end in view in order to get a grip at the concept of intentional action. Events where the question is admitted application typically have *a form of description*. Knowledge and understanding of this form of description is necessary for seeing the status of answers that give no reasons as parasitic on answers that do give reasons. If all the answers to the question 'Why?' were that there are no reasons we would not have any concept of intentional action in the first place. This form of descriptions is what makes out and establishes these kinds of events as events of a certain class. The form of these descriptions is something I will attempt to describe in the following paragraphs, where I present and discuss Anscombe's positive account of answers that are admitted application to the 'Why?' question.

The Applicability of the !Why?" Question

Anscombe introduces her positive account, and tries to explain these answers that provide reasons by way of the now famous pump example. This example raises a range of vital questions, which an account that aims at explaining what is really involved in acting intentionally ought to cover. This is how she introduces the example:

> A man is pumping water into the cistern which supplies the drinking water of a house. Someone has found a way of systematically contaminating the source with a deadly cumulative poison whose effects are unnoticeable until they can no longer be cured. The house is regularly inhabited by a small group of party chiefs, with their immediate families, who are in control of a great state; they are engaged in exterminating the Jews and perhaps plan a world war. — The man who contaminated the source has calculated that if these people are destroyed some good men will get into power who will govern well, or even institute the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and secure a good life for all the people; and he has revealed the calculation, together with the fact about the poison, to the man who is pumping. The death of the inhabitants of the house will, of course, have all sorts of other effects; e.g., that a number of people unknown to these men will receive legacies, about which they know nothing.[44]

[44] Ibid. p. 37.

In taking into account the result of the enquiry so far, under which description is this man's doing a description of intentional action? One of the things that our investigation into intentional action has shown is that in order for something to be an intentional action there has to be an answer to the question 'Why?' in the sense outlined by the previous paragraph. That is, there is a sense that the question 'Why?' may be given an answer that does not fall within the range of either, firstly, 'I was not *aware* I was doing that', secondly, that the answer implies something like 'I *observed* that I was doing that', or thirdly, when the agent answers 'It was *involuntary*'. This narrows down which actions to consider in order to see what the intentional action of the man pumping was. Only if the answer to the 'Why?' question about the descriptions is firstly true, and secondly gives application to the appropriate sense of the 'Why?' question, can we say that they are descriptions of intentional actions. Here follows a quote from *Intention* in which both of these constrains are met.

> 'Why are you moving your arm up and down?'—'I'm pumping'. 'Why are you pumping?'— 'I'm pumping the water-supply for the house'. 'Why are you beating out that curious rhythm?',— 'Oh, I found out how to do it, as the pump does click anyway, and I do it just for fun'. 'Why are you pumping the water?'— 'Because it is needed up at the house' (*sotto voce*) 'To polish that lot off'. 'Why are you poisoning these people?'—'If we can get rid of them, the other lot will get in and . . .[45]

How does one move from these descriptions given as answers to the 'Why?' question, to the rational order of intentional action? In the series of description presented in the quote there is a change in the third question and in the answer to it. '"Why are you beating out that curious rhythm?",—"Oh, I found out how to do it, as the pump does click anyway, and I do it just for fun"'[46] This question plus answer may be described as belonging to a different branch than the poisoning of the

[45] Ibid. p.38.

[46] Ibid. p.38.

inhabitants. The question ‘Why are you pumping the water’ does not follow from the description of the enjoyment that the agent finds in making this clicking sound. With the argument that the rhythm question and answer belong to a different branch of reasoning than the reasoning leading up to the poisoning of the inhabitants, we may leave this description aside. Leaving this answer aside makes it clear that the other descriptions in the quote make out a chain of reasoning. The chain that is being brought out by that they are being true descriptions of the event and that each of these descriptions are subject to the ‘Why?’ question. This chain of linked descriptions has the structure of an intentional action.

> E.g. ‘Why are you moving your arm up and down?’ ‘To operate the pump’, and he is operating the pump. ‘Why are you pumping?’ ‘To replenish the water-supply’ and he is replenishing the water-supply; ‘Why are you replenishing the water-supply?’ ‘To poison the inhabitants’ and he is poisoning the inhabitants, for they are getting poisoned.[47]

The descriptions (A) Moving his hand up and down, (B) Operating the pump, (C) Replenishing the water supply, and (D) Poisoning the inhabitants, give four descriptions under which the man is intentionally poisoning the inhabitants. There is one action with four descriptions. The poisoning of the inhabitants was the point of the activity under the description of A, B, and C. The four descriptions forms a series of descriptions where each depends on the previous one, but independent of the following one. The description of the action under A, B, and C is swallowed up by the description under D. The mark of this ‘swallowing up’, Anscombe writes, is that it is not wrong to give D as an answer to the question ‘Why?’ about A. So given the A—D order, it is not wrong to give the answer ‘To poison the inhabitants’ to the question ‘Why are you moving your arm up and down?’ The last reason given in the series is treated as the end for which the preceding descriptions form the means.

[47] Ibid. p.40.

‘When terms are related in this fashion, they constitute a series of means, the last term of which is, just by being given as the last, so far treated as end.’[48]

What if there is a temporal and spatial gap between the agent’s description of his doings and what he is actually doing? The description of the inhabitants getting poisoned occurs at a later stage than the actual moving of the pump handle. Can we then describe the doings of the man as poisoning the inhabitants? Anscombe says that we can. If the contextual set up is clear we might rely on the fact that things normally work according to plan.

Let us say that the man pumping has been working with the water supply for the last five years, and the pump, because of its reliability, has not been changed for a newer model. He is inclined to say that he knows how to handle this pump. He might rightfully say that when he operates the pump the water supply is getting replenished. He may, without looking into the water supply in order to check, say that he is replenishing the water supply when he is handling the pump in this way. There is no difference in the physical movements of the agent whether he replenishes pure or poisonous water into the cistern. Since the agent in normal cases may be confident that the water is getting into the cistern when he is operating the pump, in the right sort of way, there is no reason why he should not trust that the pump will work according to the plan in this case as well.

What if the man pumping is being informed by a so called expert on these pumping devices that the pump will not lead this poisonous substance out to the water system of the building. The expert tells him that inside the pump there is some kind of filter mechanism. The job of this filter is to make sure that it is only clean water that is being lead through the hose to the apartments of the building. The poison the man pumping is planning to contaminate the water with is exactly one of those sorts of substances that this mechanism is supposed to make unharmful. One may

[48] Ibid. p.47.

now say that the man pumping is being given a reason why he should not trust that the pump would replenish the water supply with poisonous water. How does being given such a reason affect the description the man may give of what he is doing?

Let us say that our man, in spite of being given this information, obstinately sticks to his opinion and says while pumping, ‘I don’t care about that. I do not believe it. I *am* poisoning these inhabitants.’ Let us say that the inhabitants are getting poisoned. What can we now say of what the man pumping did? Would we still say that he intentionally poisoned the inhabitants? I reckon we would. In this example it seem as if the not most rational belief is the one that the man pumping chooses to act upon. The fact that this was not the most rational choice does not seem to have any effect on whether to determine the event as intentional or not. What does this possibility of not having to act on the most rational end say about the nature of action? One of the advantages with Anscombe’s story is that she does not have to deal with questions of ‘causing in the right sort of way’. The reason explains what he does and that is everything we need in order explain what he did as an intentional action. I find that Anscombe in opening for this ability of not having to act on the most rational possibility leads the attention to practical knowledge and its special directedness in acting.

Ascombe writes that the chain of linked descriptions comes to a break in giving ‘to save the Jews’ as a description of what he is doing. Why can one not give the description ‘saving the Jews’ as a description of what he does? What she means by describing this answer as a break of the A—D order is not entirely clear. With the other descriptions that the man gives of what he does in the A—D order, they are such that we might say that he is operating the pump, he is replenishing the house water supply and he is poisoning the inhabitants. One option might be to think of this break as if this description of what she does introduced to large uncertainty concerning the causal situation. So, if the answer to the question ‘Why?’ is a description of something in the future that has not jet happened, then the chain of answers that is admitted application to the ‘Why?’ question comes to a break. I do not think that such a gap in the time laps are anything that should be described as a

'break' and I do not see why one should read Anscombe as saying so either. Even if the poison is cumulative, and so the inhabitants getting poisoned, occur on a much later stage then his operating the pump, this does not imply that one cannot describe what the man is doing in operating the pump as 'poisoning the inhabitants'. One might apply this point to the 'saving of the Jews'. Even if the saving of the Jews occurs on a later stage than his operating the pump, this should not make the man pumping inclined not to answer the question 'Why?' with the description 'to save the Jews'. I will not deny that describing 'operating the pump' as 'saving the Jews', implies a more complex relation than the description of 'operating the pump' as 'poisoning the inhabitants'. The complexity of a relation could maybe involve uncertainty concerning the causal situation.

> And here comes the break; for though in the case we have described there is probably a further answer, other than 'just for fun', all the same this further description (e.g. to save the Jews, to put in the good men, to get the kingdom of Heaven on earth) is not such that we can now say: he is saving the Jews, he is getting the Kingdom of Heaven, he is putting in the good ones.[49]

In looking at the intentional action in past tense, as it turns out the Jews were saved because the inhabitants drank the poisoned water. What can we then say about the relation between the A—D order and the description 'to save the Jews'? The description 'to save the Jews' is a description of something he did. Rather then dismissing this description, this description is the description of the intention *with which* he acted. The description *with which* is certainly one of the descriptions of why the man pumping does what he does. Poisoning the inhabitants for no further reason seems kind of strange. In most cases there is a further reason why one is poisoning someone. So, even if the description of the man pumping as saving the Jews is not a description of what is happening *now*, it is somehow part of the description of what

[49] Ibid. p. 40.

the man does. In introducing a break with this description I do not think that Anscombe's aim is to reject the role of the intention *with which*.

There will be restrictions on when you can rightfully say that you know you are doing something. Now I would like to claim that not all of these restrictions are restrictions of knowledge. With Anscombe's example with the man pumping, for example, it is not as if he can say that in pumping he is saving the Jews. That he cannot say this may not only be due to his not having the knowledge required to say this. Let us say that the Jews turn out to be saved, and the poisoning of the inhabitants is shown really to be a reason why they are saved. The inhabitants of the house were just about to set their plan of exterminating all Jews into action, while the man pumping knew about this plan, and then the water got poisoned and the inhabitants died. So the reason why the man did what he did was that he wanted to save the Jews. Poisoning the inhabitants was a means to this end for him. And he succeeded. In poisoning the inhabitants he saved the Jews. Did the man pumping not know he was saving the Jews in poisoning the inhabitants? I would say that the man pumping *knew* that he was poisoning the inhabitants. Even if he knew this it is not certain that we would *say* that he knew it. The point is that this may be due to the conversational implicatures and not to a lack in knowledge. There might be a difference between what we can say and what we can know. And I find that this example with the man pumping to point at such a distinction. Is knowledge not enough every time to make an assertion about a matter? Anscombe does not spell out these questions in *Intention.* However, I find that she is pointing in this direction in her discussion of the A—D order and the intention with which one acts.

If any of the descriptions the man gives of himself is proven wrong, then he simply was mistaken. What if, for example, unknown to the man pumping, there is a hole in the hose so that the poisonous water is leeking out of it? What kinds of statements of what he is doing are now available to the man pumping? Well, every description that he gives of what he is doing in the A—D order is available. It is just that D is shown to be an untrue description of what he is doing. In being informed of this hole in the hose the natural thing to say would not be 'When I was pumping I

knew I was poisoning the inhabitants, now I know that I were not'. Rather when shown or told that he was not poisoning the inhabitants he would answer with something such as, 'Well, I thought I was poisoning the inhabitants, but I was mistaken'. So, *in* pumping he might have said that he *was* poisoning the inhabitants, but when proven wrong it would be strange to stick to this claim to knowledge. In fact, since it never was a true description it was never a case of knowledge. One cannot claim knowledge of what is not the case.

What sort of control of truthfulness can we check the answers to the question 'Why?' against? What tools are available if the person pumping says something like this: 'I didn't care tuppence one way or the other for the fact that someone had poisoned the water, I just wanted to earn my pay without trouble by doing my usual job—I go with the house, see? and it doesn't matter to me who's in it'[50]? For one thing there are these things that we might check against a background of knowledge that is in some sense not agent dependent. Is what the agent did in pumping really the course of his usual job? If there is something he does or does not do that normally is in the usual course of his job, then he cannot claim that he is only doing his usual job. Even if he is doing his usual job, and even if he is not doing anything that does not belong to the description of it, it might be that he is lying about his interest in doing it. And so the real reason for him pumping poisonous water into the house might be that he sees the inhabitants of the house as the scum of the earth that do not deserve to live on this planet, and so he wants to take their lives by poisoning them. Or he may be pumping the poison because he hopes to be rewarded in some way or other.

In order to try to detect the real intention of the man who pumpd the poison, Anscombe writes that the detective might ask questions like '"Well then you won't be much interested to hear that the poison is old and won't work"; or "Then you won't be claiming a share in a great sum with which someone wishes to reward

[50] Ibid. p. 42.

the conspirators"',[51] and try to see what the immediate genuine reaction of the agent is to such utterances. These two ways of trying to detect the truth behind the agent's answer in no way provides a hundred percent truth guarantee. It might be that this agent's doings bear no outward sign of she not doing her usual job and that she is so much in control of her immediate reactions, so that she might manipulate them to appear as she wants them to. Even if this might happen, these are not the normal cases. In the normal case people are not so much in control of their immediate reactions. However, I do not think that this field requires a hundred percent truth guarantee either.

Let's say that one had access to this person's inner life. Does the performance of thinking 'I am only earning my pay by doing my usual job' change the whole character of the thing happening? As Anscombe points out, it is not enough that these words occur to the agent in order to do this. Having these thoughts does not change the character of the thing happening. The agent has to mean them in earnest in order for them to do so. That she means them in earnest implies that the agent lets this become a part of his calculative chain of reasoning. And the calculative chain of reasoning is that which issues in action. The calculative chain of reasoning issuing in action is some sort of causal story. The practical argument makes things happening in the world. For Anscombe the conclusion of the practical argument is an intentional action. The theoretical argument is also a form of reasoning that makes things happen in the world. But where the practical argument issued in action, the theoretical argument issues in new mental content, an idea. Both these forms of conclusions did not exist before the arguments were set out in full, and both of them issued in new events in the world. With 'new events in the world' I mean to say that new descriptions of the world is being made possible through this argument.

It is therefore not enough that the agent makes a little inner speech in order to convince herself that she is only earning her pay by doing her usual job. To

[51] Ibid. p. 48.

get at an understanding of what intention is, we have to start at intentional action, and an intentional action is never just a performance. That is, it is neither just a mental nor a physical performance. If having the thought 'I am only earning my pay' matters for the explanation that the agent would give of her acting in facing the 'Why?' question, then having this thought makes a difference in giving a correct account of intention in acting.

> So intention is never a performance in the mind, though in some matters a performance in the mind which is seriously *meant* may make a difference to the correct account of the man's action—e.g. in embracing someone. But the matter in question are necessarily ones in which outward acts are 'significant' in some way.[52]

An intentional action may be given in a whole range of descriptions. Not all of these descriptions are intentional. In order to get at intention Anscombe starts with a description of intentional action. Her manner of starting with these is like pointing to the performance of these events and saying, 'Look, we have these things that we do. How may we describe these events? Let us try this approach: that in doing something intentionally we do not know what we are doing by matter of observation and what we are doing is subject to a question "Why?"'

The outcome of the enquiry so far is the A—D order. But what does this order actually tell us about the subject of intentional action? That is, what is the subject of knowing in this so-called 'chain of reasoning'? The object for knowledge is of course truth. The most important insight from the enquiry is that acting intentionally is a certain way of knowing. In doing something intentionally I know that I am doing this intentional thing. This is not only a knowledge of the necessary preconditions for doing this particular intentional action. It is a way of knowing that initiate these events as intentional actions.

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[52] Ibid. p. 49.

Intentional actions are actions done for a reason, and so essentially bearers of meaning. This is something I know when I act, or when I observe others acting intentionally. Without this way of knowing the field of intentional action would not be. There is an ordered structure when we do things for a reason. This ordered structure is what Anscombe's 'Why?' question sheds light upon. But the structure is not something that the 'Why?' question 'makes happen'. It is an order that is in the nature of things when we act intentionally.[53] Anscombe writes that the concept of 'intentional action' is something that exists because of this special order that is there whenever something is done with an intention. If the man pumping did not know what he was doing under the description 'poisoning the inhabitants', then there simply would not be any description of him as intentionally poisoning those inhabitants.

[53] Ibid. p. 80.

Part Five

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

Practical Reasoning and its Way of Knowing.

In this chapter I will try to illuminate Anscombe's notion of practical knowledge. The thoughts about this field as it is presented in *Intention* does seem in some respect intrinsically true. I will argue that Anscombe's notion of practical knowledge is the outcome of the inquiry into non-observational knowledge and the question 'Why?' The field of practical knowledge covers both what the preconditions for doing something intentionally is, and what constitutes intentional action. Practical knowledge is as known a very vast and complex field. In order to get at practical knowledge, Anscombe writes, we have to start with an account of practical reasoning, and so we will.

To illustrate the relation between theoretical and practical reasoning, Anscombe takes an example of a man who shops. He has made a list of what he wants to buy and now he is walking around in town and buying the items on the list. The man has practical knowledge of what he is doing. A detective is following him around and writing down everything the man buys. The detective has theoretical knowledge of what the man is doing. The object of knowledge in this example is what the shopper is buying. The object of knowledge is the same even if it is known by way of observation, or if it is the shopper's knowledge of what he is doing in doing it. If both the practical reasoning, leading up to what the shopper does, and the theoretical reasoning, leading up to what the detective writes down on his list, cohere, they would lead to the same descriptions. These are descriptions of what the shopper actually bought.

> Let us consider a man going round a town with a shopping list in his hand. Now it is clear that the relation of this list to the things he actually buys is one and the same whether his wife gave him the list or it is his

> own list; and that there is a different relation when a list is made by a detective following him about. If he made the list itself, it was an expression of intention; if his wife gave it him, it has the role of an order.[54]

What is this object that is identical in practical and theoretical reasoning? Actually I do not find Anscombe to be clear on this point. The object of a theoretical argument is to show the truth of the conclusion. About the practical argument Anscombe in *Intention* seems to be inclined to say that the conclusion is an action.[55] I find these remarks confusing. How can a conclusion of an argument be an action? And if we accept that it is an action, what can possibly be the identical relation to the truth of the conclusion in a theoretical argument?

I find the shopping list example to be excellent in that it introduce a way of thinking about the features of the object of practical and theoretical reasoning. The man out shopping has a practical attitude towards the things on his list. The detective takes his list to give a true account of what the man buys. Let us say that the practical reasoning and the theoretical reasoning cohere, and so the words appearing on these two lists are identical. What does these two identical lists say about the object of practical and theoretical reasoning?

This is what I want to suggest: the sameness between the objects of the theoretical and practical reasoning is sameness in propositional content.[56] In theoretical reasoning you have a truth attitude towards a proposition. Practical reasoning on the other hand is characterised by its focus on action. The purpose for the detective to write his list is to give true descriptions of what the man does. The purpose of the list for the shopper, on the other hand, is action. He will make the descriptions on the list into descriptions of the world.

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[54] Ibid. p.56.

[55] Ibid. p.60.

[56] I thank Olav Gjelsvik for this thought.

To describe the conclusion of the argument in both practical and theoretical reasoning as propositional content makes sense of the claim that the object of knowledge in practical and theoretical reasoning is the same. The shopper example is very rewarding in that it in a clear way spells out this propositional content. We have the propositional content on a piece of paper. For the shopper, the words on the list give a description of some of the intentions the man had in going to town. And for the detective the list is a description of his observation of what the shopper has bought.

The man shopping has some sort of active attitude towards the thing known, while the detective has a truth attitude towards this same object. In the shopping list example we have this very concrete example, which enables us from the outside to see whether the intention the man had in acting goes wrong. Even if the shopper has such a list, this do of course not question whether he has non-observational knowledge of what he is doing. The way to look at the list is if the shopper is having some of his intentions materialized. He has a physical object where he has written down something he wanted in going to town.Normally when we act intentionally what we do is of course not following any list. Most of our intentional actions are not as complex as making crème brulee, or shopping all the ingredients for making Christmas dinner. So in the most cases of intentional action we do not need a list in order to say that we know what we are doing. The shoppers shopping list is made due to the complexity of the plan. If we had to have list of everything we did, we would have problems ever getting to action.

The thought about the active attitude in practical knowledge is somehow connected to a few claims in Richard Moran's insightful paper, 'Anscombe on "Practical Knowledge"'.[57] In this paper he talks about an active/passive distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. I think that Moran touches on something essential in describing the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge with a focus on the active description of the latter. Here he writes that,

[57] Moran, R. 'Anscombe on "Practical Knowledge"', in Hyman, Steward (eds.) 2004

> Unlike theoretical or speculative knowledge, practical knowledge will not be passive or receptive to the facts in question, but is rather a state of the person that plays a role in the constituting of such facts. This is not to say that ordinary observation has no relevance here, but rather that it plays a different role than it does in the case of knowledge which *is passive* or receptive with respect to the facts in question.[58]

However, I would not describe the knowledge per se as active or passive. I would rather say that the thing known is the same in practical and theoretical reasoning. It is the attitude that one takes to the conclusion that distinguishes them.

Even if there is sameness in objects, the *ways* in which one gets to know the objects differ. To show this difference in way of knowing is the purpose of this argument. The aim of the practical argument is to act, while the aim of the theoretical argument is true belives. In order to draw attention to the different *ways* of knowing, Anscombe introduces the subject of mistake in performance. This concept is of course closely related to the concept of truth.

What if the man buys margarine mistaking it for being butter, which is what he has written on his list? What he then does, buying margarine, is not in accordance with what he takes himself to be doing, buying butter. If we ask our shopper what he is doing, when he is in the store putting margarine in his basket, he would say that he is buying butter. The fact that this is not a true description of what he is in fact *doing* constitutes the mistake. The conclusion of his argument, the propositional content 'I am buying butter', is not what he is doing. There is no link between the conclusion of his practical argument and the thing done. In order to correct the mistake in performance, the shopper corrects what he did. He may go back to the store and buy the butter he intended to buy. Now, what he takes himself to be doing, buying butter, is what he actually does. A mistake in practical reasoning on the other hand is something different than mistake in performance. These kinds of

[58] Ibid. p. 47.

mistakes are mistakes where one just errs in the practical argument, one is for example reasoning on this very complicated thing to do. It is difficult to spell out what this kind of mistake could be without seeming trivial.

In theoretical reasoning the direction to the thing known is of a different kind. If the man shopping buys something other than what he has written on his list, this will not have any impact on whether the list the detective writes of what the man is buying gives a true description. Something that would be a mistake, however, would be if the detective writes the word butter when the man actually is buying margarine. If made aware of his mistake, though, the detective would most probably just alter the word on his list to margarine. What one is doing in theoretical reasoning is giving true descriptions of the world. If any of one's descriptions of the world is wrong, then one changes the description in question. Theoretical reasoning does not take a practical attitude to the propositional content of the conclusion. One might say that whereas mistakes in performance is met with an attempt to change the world in order to fit ones description, mistakes in theoretical reasoning is met with an attempt to change ones descriptions so that it fits the world one is describing.

The difference between the way theoretical and practical reasoning deals with error has made some writers inclined to identify a different 'direction of fit' in practical versa theoretical reasoning. The concept of 'direction of fit' is not Anscombe's, but the shopping list example is held in the literature as a primary example of the concept.[59] I find this concept to be helpful in that it demarks some essential differences between practical and theoretical reasoning. It explains that the attitude one takes to the conclusion in practical reasoning is different than the attitude one take towards the conclusion in practical reasoning. The difference in relation could be seen in the relation the detective have to his list as compared to the relation the shopper has to his list. In this story the person with theoretical knowledge has a world-to-mind direction of fit, while the person with practical knowledge has a mind-

[59] Searl was the first to describe this example as a prime example of this concept, John Searl, *Intentionality: An Essay Concerning the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1983.

to-world direction of fit. The 'mind', 'world' vocabulary in the description of this relation should be understood in a metaphorically way.

In theoretical reasoning we try to make our descriptions fit the world. This means that when we reason about a theoretical subject matter we look for true descriptions of it. How the world really is is supposed to match or fit the description one gives of it. So, the propositional content the detective is giving of what the man is doing should describe how the world really is. In practical reasoning, on the other hand, the aim is to act according to how we want the world to turn out. The description of what we want, that is the propositional content the shopper has on which he acted, is supposed to fit the description of how the world turns out.

In, 'Anscombe on Practical Inference', Candace Vogler argues against reading the shopping list example as a demonstration of a concept of 'different directions of fit', where this concept is taken to imply a description of the radical difference between mind and world.[60] Reading the shopping list example in this way would be to treat this example as some kind of 'psychological allegory', Volgler writes. Vogler is on the point when arguing against reading the shopper example as an example of this kind of dichotomy. The point of the shopping list example, she argues, is mainly to show the different purpose with practical contra theoretical reasoning, which could be described as a 'difference in direction of fit'. The asymmetry between these different sorts of reasoning is shown in the different sorts of mistakes that someone doing practical reasoning contra someone doing theoretical reasoning would make performing practical reasoning contra the one performing theoretical reasoning would make. So, even if there is a match between the object of conclusion of practical and theoretical reasoning, the point of the reasoning is very different.

[60] Candace Vogler, 'Anscombe on Practical Inference' (In Milgram, E, (ed.), *Varieties of Practical Reasoning,* MIT University Press, 2001) p.2.

Both theoretical and practical reasoning make new things happen in the world. The aim of the argument, however, is a state of mind in theoretical reasoning while it is the intentional action in practical reasoning. The point of a process of reasoning is to acquire new knowledge. Even if the object, that is the conclusion, is the same, the direction or the attitude one takes towards the object of knowledge is very different. The conclusion for both theoretical and practical reasoning is propositional content. In practical reasoning one has a mind-to-fit-world attitude, while the theoretical reasoning has a world-to-fit-mind attitude.

Theoretical reasoning may of course be about a practical subject matter, as it is in the example with the man shopping. Another of Anscombe's examples of theoretical reasoning on a practical subject matter is an example that could have been taken directly from a math class in my childhood. There is no doubt that this is theoretical reasoning. The example is as follows. Someone is driving from Chartres to Paris. The distance is sixty miles. Starting at five and driving at an average of sixty m.p.h he will arrive in Paris about six o'clock. This piece of reasoning shows the truth of what is argued, but it does not end with anything done. This is due to the attitude that the person making the argument has towards the thing she argues about.

For something to be a premise in practical reasoning it has to be part of a calculative chain that leads to the action. One thing is certain, the practical as well as the theoretical argument has to follow the rules of inference necessary to make the argument valid. The argument may not be counted as valid if these rules are not followed. But reasoning on what to do is practical rather than theoretical. One looks for what to do, rather than for the truth of a conclusion. This implies that the states of mind, or the optic in which one views the world, differ between these two kinds of reasoning. My point is that even though there is a differences in attitude between these two kinds of reasoning, in belonging to the thing called reasoning they both have essential things in common. In order to be called reasoning they have to fulfil certain obligations. Practical reasoning is of course not exception to these rules.

Acting for Ends.

However, in saying that practical arguments lead to propositional content, and that the agent has an action attitude towards this conclusion, what gets the practical argument started, and what makes one acting on the conclusion? How does the agent choose what to act on? In joining Aristotle, Anscombe says that this relation is best seen as a means–end relation. Reasoning with an end in view is the basic case for intentional action. The premises is described as means towards acting on the conclusion. The thing wanted shows the direction where the argument is headed and at the same time it expresses the end, that is, what the action is done for. Even if I don't share Anscombe's view on the form of the conclusion, I find this means–end relation to be a true description of the subject. In performing a practical argument, the agent is aware of this relation, and the reasons she would give in order to explain why she did a certain thing would point to this relation.

Let us for a moment return to the example of someone who jumps at the sight of a face in the window. Another way of seeing that this event is not an intentional action becomes obvious if one tries to reconstruct what happens as a practical argument. In the argument of practical reasoning the premises are typically formed as a means that leads to the thing done which are acting on the conclusion of the practical argument. The thing done in this example is somebody wincing, and what lead up to it is spotting a face in the window. Even if spotting the face is what leads up to the jumping, there is no argument to be reconstructed according to which the jumping turns out as the end of what one is doing. The link between the jumping and spotting the face is not something that could be described in the terms of reason.

The order of practical reasoning is what was the outcome of Anscombe's enquiry into the question 'Why?' The order she arrived at in the example of the man pumping was the A–D order. It was a chain of linked descriptions, where each description follows the other ones, and they were related to each other as means to ends. In describing intentional action it is this means–end form of reasoning one

describes them in. Without this form of reasoning, intentional actions would not come about. In doing something intentionally, this means–end order is present.

One may ask, what is it that starts the inferential process of a practical argument? What makes the man shopping actually buy the items on his list? These questions touch on how we choose our ends, why we act as we do. Anscombe deals with these questions in her discussion of how to set the premises so that they lead to an action.

In paragraph 33 of *Intention* Anscombe argues against setting the first premise in a practical argument in a universal or an imperative form. In giving premises of this kind, Anscombe claims, one is making practical reasoning into something it is not. If given this form, a practical argument does not come to the conclusion of performing a specific action, which is what Anscombe takes the practical reasoning to lead up to. Let me stress the following point: in saying that the conclusion is not an action in a practical argument, I of course do not want to take any weight off the importance of the action in practical reasoning. The whole point of practical reasoning is that it is headed towards action.

Anscombe claim that she takes the universal example from Aristotle. I would like to add that this is Anascombe's reading of Aristotle and not a direct quote from any of his writings. Anyhow here is her example.

Dry food suits any human

Such-and-such food is dry

I am human

This is a bit of such-and-such food

yielding the conclusion

This food suits me[61]

[61] *Intention*. p.58.

The problem with the universal premise is that even though it necessitates the conclusion, no action seem to follow. Holding the conclusion, that this food suits me, to be true does not involve any necessary impediment on my action. It is still an open question whether I choose to eat or not to eat the suitable food. Anscombe's main point with this example is that what one is left with if one accepts universal premises is some queer sort of theoretical reasoning. One reasons in order to attain the truth of the conclusion without involving any necessary relation to acting.

The example of setting the first premise in an imperative form avoids some of the disadvantages we saw with Aristotle's universal premise, that is, problems explaining how an action would have to follow from the premises. Someone who accepts the argument that has premises in the imperative form will be inconsistent if – when nothing stops her, she fails to act on the order on which the argument ended. Anscombe states her example of an argument of this form looks like this:

> D o everything conductive to not having a car crash.
>
> Such-and-such will be conductive to not having a car crash.
>
> Ergo: Do such and such.

The practical argument in the imperative form has no problem of explaining how the argument is related to acting on the premises. Someone who accepts the premise of this kind will be inconsistent if, when nothing stops her, she fails to act on the order with which the argument ends. The problem with an argument in the imperative form, though, is that the first premise is, as Anscombe writes, an insane one. The phenomena for this enquiry is how to describe action. Every time I do something intentionally it is not as if I have an impediment in form of a strong 'Do X!' that drives me to do what I am doing. In addition to this there are almost endless ways of executing the impediment to the first premise. How can one choose what to do when

the motivation is just the impediment of not having a car crash? Any action conductive to not having a car crash would do.

> For there are usually a hundred different and incompatible things conductive to not having a car crash; such as, perhaps, driving into the private gateway immediately on your left and abandoning your car there, and driving into the private gateway immediately on your right and abandoning the car there.[62]

There is a whole range of opportunities for how to act on an impediment of, for example, not having a car crash. What action to choose remains an open question. There is a choice of how to act in practical reasoning and the story one gives has to give an account of this. In acting, an agent has chosen *this* action. I think that Anscombe is mainly right in her argument that in working with impediments, it seems as if this aspect is not explained.

Anscombe writes that practical reasoning is reasoning towards what to do. I totally agree with her, it is reasoning that ends with someone doing something. One chooses and executes one specific action. Given the premises in a practical argument the question of how to act on them is open. If I am thirsty and decide to have a drink, there are almost endless possibilities of how I can fulfil this want. For example I might go to the kitchen and pour myself a glass of water and drink it; I might go to the shop at the street corner and buy a beverage of some kind and drink it; or I might take a plane to the Himalayan's, climb a mountain, melt some snow and drink. Given the premises of how I could quench my thirst there is no necessity involved in how to act on one of the alternatives, but the point is that according to Anscombe, it is not a practical argument before I am actually drinking and meeting the want shown by the premises. In this example it seems it seems as if the conclusion and the action comes together. The point is though, that withouth the thing

[62] Ibid. p.59.

wanted, the urge for water, the inferential process would not get started, and no action would happen.

Our motivations, in the everyday use of the word, are what sets the inferential process of the practical argument started. These motivations are *the things wanted*. ""This is so, of course, and is a point insisted on by Aristotle himself: the *ἀρχή* (starting point) is *τὸ ὀρεκτόν* (the thing wanted)."[63] The object of want is the starting point for practical reasoning. It is necessary that there is an actual motivation for the reasoning to start. At the same time the want expresses the end. That is, it expresses the direction the action is intended to take. Anscombe would say something like, having performed the conclusion of a valid practical argument, the point of the action, what one wants, will be viewable from the premises that lead up to this conclusion. Whereas I want to say that when we act on the conclusion, the point of this action is seen from the premises leading up to the conclusion of the argument. I think that it is correct to describe the thing wanted as the starting point for a practical argument. It gives a true description of what sets the practical argument started, and where it is heading.

What is wanted is expressed through the premise of the practical argument, but the *want* is not in itself a premise of such an argument. Anscombe claim that what is wanted cannot be a premise of such an argument, because what is wanted is the motivation that has to be present for such a chain of reasoning to start at all. An agent may reason about what to do without actually doing it, because she may be free from the want of performing this action. In placing the thing wanted beyond the argument she focuses on how the thing wanted is a condition for the argument towards acting on the premises.

[63] Ibid. p. 63.

> The role of 'wanting' in the practical syllogism is quite different from that of a premise. It is that whatever is described in the proposition that is the starting-point of the argument must be wanted in order for the reasoning to lead to any action..[64]

To find out what an agent wants with her actions, one asks what the agent wants in a specific context, that is, you ask this question when you are pointing to the actual doings of the agent, 'With a view to what you are doing X, Y and Z?' What is wanted in the specific circumstances of the agent's doings marks of the thing wanted as something specific. When the wanted is characterised as desirable, no further question of what the object is wanted for needs answering. Characterising something as 'desirable' means that you want it for something. The way an agent acts after the fulfilment of the desire reveals whether she rely wanted it or not and whether the thing wanted was wanted *for* something.

The question 'What do you want that for?' is closely related to the question, 'What's the good of it?' Both lead to a characterisation of something as desirable and good, or useful in some sense. The 'goodness' or 'usefulness' reveals the purpose of the action and is the object of the want. 'Good' is a very special and difficult concept. It is enough for Anscombe's notion of practical reasoning that the agent is able to argue why something is a good for *her*. It is not the good for all humankind that distinguishes the object of want in practical reasoning, but what the agent conceives of as good. '*Bonum est multiplex:* good is multiform, and all that is required for our concept of "wanting" is that a man should see what he wants under the aspect of some good.'[65]

Even though all that is required for the concept of wanting is that one may say that one wants it under the aspect of some good, one has to be able to argue in favour of what one conceives of as wanted. If a person wants health and pleasure

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[64] Ibid. p.66.

[65] Ibid. p.75.

though, there is no need for the additional information that she conceives of these as good. ‘Goodness’ is inherent in both of these concepts. To say that health is good is therefore, according to Anscombe, a tautology, and so to ask ‘what’s the good of it’, is senseless.

In distinguishing what is wanted from its relatives, wishing, hoping and the feeling of desire, she comes up with what she writes is the primitive sign of wanting. The primitive sign of wanting is *trying to get*[66] One cannot claim that ‘A wants X’ if A does not do anything to get X, or make X happen. If something is wanted then there is a movement towards this thing. To try to get something is to describe the movements of the agent beyond what she presently is doing.

Anscombe’s story about the thing wanted as that which starts off the inferential process of the practical argument and that which expresses the end of the reasoning is a story that I find to be a true description. The ‘want’ describes the direction of the practical reasoning. In the shopping list example, the man’s shopping list, gives descriptions of how he *wants* the world to turn out. One of the instructions on the shopping list was ‘Buy butter’. This instruction, which might be seen as an expression of intention if the man himself wrote the list, gives the direction for which the argument that leads to the conclusion on which the shopper acts. In acting, buying the butter, the description of how the shopper wanted the world to turn out, fits how the world turns out. The description of intentional action could not occur prior to the phenomena of acting for ends, since the description of acting for ends is part of the concept of intentional action.

Conclusion

If practical knowledge is the outcome of practical reasoning, one might think that the way to understand this field is by starting with intentional action in the past tense

[66] Ibid. p. 68.

when the whole argument is available to us. However, Anscombe starts her discussion of intentional action in the present tense. I find that in approaching the subject through a study in the present tense, she shows a deep understanding of practical knowledge as the basic, fundamental structure of intention. In starting with a study of intention in the present tense, Anscombe focuses on the practical side of intention. The examples of situations in which people actually do things are the basic examples of intention. In order to achieve an understanding of the concept of intention, the way to start, Anscombe seems to maintain, would be with the successful examples of agency. In these examples the special features of agency are brought out more clearly. Starting with the basic examples in the way Anscombe does, enables us to get at the core of intentional action and practical knowledge.

The most important insight in the enquiry is that acting intentional is a certain way of knowing. In having non-observational knowledge of what you are doing, your knowledge is directed in a certain kind of way. Knowledge of the pre-conditions enables one to know *how to* act in order get where you want. In knowing the thing wanted and the end for which you act, you know *why* you do as you do. So, in *Intention,* Anscombe tells a story about knowledge as the basic state in acting. The direction, the 'how to' and the 'why' are different aspects of the same phenomenon. Taken together, these aspects of knowing amounts to practical knowledge.

These features are linked together into a whole. Anscombe's theory is composed of three elements. Taken together this theory explains practical knowledge as something that is intrinsically different from theoretical knowledge. This difference is, as we have seen in our discussion of the concept of direction of fit, not explained by a difference in object. Rather is a difference caused by the special practical way of knowing. This way of knowing that somewhat initiate these events as intentional actions. Without this way of knowing the field of intentional action would not exist.

In one of the central passages of her book, Anscombe quotes Aquinas saying that ‘practical knowledge’ is ‘the cause of what it understands’.[67] I hope that we now are now more inclined to understand what is meant by these words. Anscombe’s point is that without practical knowledge, intentional action would not come under the head ‘intentional action’. This does not only mean that practical knowledge is a precondition for acting intentionally. It means that acting intentionally is acting *on* ones practical knowledge. Without practical knowledge one would not have the conceptual apparatus to describe what it is to act intentionally. So the overall claim of this investigation into intentional action is that intentional action comes with a whole lot of knowledge. Without this kind of knowledge, one would not have a phenomenon that should be described as intentional action.

[67] *Intention*. p. 87.

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